Sevens
(セブンス)
Volume 18
We've Come All the Way Here, Eighteenth Generation

Wai
(わい)

Story Description:

Lyle Walt is a young noble boy and heir looking forward to the

day he can inherit his family's territory. Except around when he was 10 year old, his parents started neglecting him more and more in favour of his little sister, Celes. On his fifteenth birthday, he is challenged to a duel by his sister to see who will inherit the household and horribly loses, being cast out of his family.

Afterwards, he gets treated by the family groundskeepers and receives the family heirloom Gem from him that Lyle's grandfather had entrusted to him. From there, he begins an aimless journey with his childhood friend and former fiancée, Novem, and the Gem-turned-Jewel that houses the

memories, personalities, and Skills of seven of his ancestors.

Original Story can be found here:
Link

Prologue

... Capital of the Bahnseim Kingdom, Centralle.

In the audience room of the royal palace, Celes sat on the newly-prepared throne, leisurely kicking her legs as she blissfully relaxed. Beyond the lines of armored authorities, the large door at the front opened, and a messenger raced in.

“Message! The enemy forces surround Centralle. Their numbers are estimated at six hundred thousand!”

Hearing that, those of the Bahnseim Royal line beside Celes were shook

up. The others simply listened to the report expressionlessly.

Celes' mouth warped on the report and she smiled. To her, her husband Rufus spoke anxiously.

"H-hey, Celes. Will we be alright? While we've concentrated our troops in Centralle, with the attacks happening across the lands, we haven't even been able to gather two hundred thousand. I-if we're to lose, then..."

There, Celes stood. She turned her face to Rufus.

"Lose? Me? That's impossible. That's definitely impossible. I mean, everything up to now has gone just as I expected. No matter how sly an

army of the living tries to be, they cannot win against dead men. And our troops don't only number two hundred thousand."

Rufus tilted his head a bit.

"No, Celes... there are only two hundred thousand soldiers in Centralle."

Celes smiled as she spoke to Rufus.

"Every single one of the over-a-million citizens of this city are my troops. They'll all fight for me. I mean, life and death no longer matters."

As Rufus failed to grasp the gist, Celes laughed to herself. And she transported herself straight from the audience chamber. Her guard,

the butler Burt in his tailcoat. Rummel whose long black hair dragged along the ground... taking along her favorites, she headed for the balcony.

And what Rufus saw as he followed along had gone beyond his imagination.

Those that filled the plaza were, without a doubt, soldiers. But it wasn't as if the capital consisted of nothing but able men. There were old men and women only natural for a city to have, and yet those that covered the plaza were nothing but soldiers.

"From the elderly to babies... everyone offers their lives to me. That's why every single civilian in

Centralle became a soldier."

Rufus took a step back in surprise, his back running into something.

"M-Maizel-dono... no, father-in-law, even mother-in-law."

Maizel and Claire appeared on the Balcony in their full armor. Their empty eyes didn't take in someone like Rufus at all.

"Celes, so this is where you were? The supreme commander should be properly preparing.

"That's right, Celes. Quickly come inside. No matter what happens, the two of us will protect you."

On her parents' words, Celes turned and send a smile. The skirt of her

white dress spread out, swaying in a similar fashion to her golden hair.

“Got~ it. But when the battle reaches such a scale, I can’t help but be excited.”

Seeing Celes’ innocent smile, Maizel gave a warm smile himself.

“As expected of a daughter of the Walt House. In your veins flows the blood of a feudal noble.”

Claire touched a hand to her face as she tilted her head.

“Though I was hoping she’d turn out a bit more graceful. Well, even like this you’re still cute, so you’re fine as you are, Celes.”

The two by her side, a delighted

Celes returned to the royal palace. Watching her form from behind, Rufus...

“Ah, how reliable you are, Celes.”

His face flushed, he followed faithfully behind...

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“Affix the mobile fortress! Direct the cannons at the gate! Centralle’s wall isn’t going to crumble so easily. Concentrate fire on one point!”

The moving fortress slowly advanced, and once it stopped, it

lowered its base with a thunk, driving stakes into the ground.

Under the cloudy sky, the fortress stood boldly before the gate of Centralle.

From the room where decisions were made, Vera issued one order after the next.

“Just because we’ve stopped, don’t let the flame of the motion hearth die down! Tell the workshop that there’s no telling when we’ll move, so they should brace themselves for it.”

As I was taking a sidelong glance at Vera sitting in her seat and barking out orders, General Blois called over to me.

“Now then, I’m going somewhere it’s easier to take command from as well. Lyle-dono, properly call out to me when the attack begins.”

I nodded and gave a light raise of my right hand to respond before looking straight ahead.

“Now then, how will our opponent move on the first day?”

It was a large-scale battle.

Will they suddenly reveal their hand to take us by surprise...

Monica nearby conveyed a report.

“Human forms have been confirmed atop the castle ramparts. But they are not showing any reaction from your Skill. They are

already dead."

There was a flag hoisted on the ramparts, and beyond it they were preparing to intercept. I put a hand to my mouth at this quiet beginning.

"... How are our siege weapon preparations?"

Monica responded at once.

"Preparations are at around seventy percent. But there are some differences in performance among the members of this alliance. There are many armies who have yet to prepare, it seems."

It's only natural they'd never experienced a battle of this scale, but the usual level was only on a

scale of hundreds. At most, there were countries who'd experienced wars of thousands. I'm sure they were shrinking back.

"Have them hurry up. In the worst case, they can just work on making their stockades as thoughtfully as possible."

From fighting the armies dispatched from Centralle, I could tell the sort of battle Celes favored. Perhaps from Septem's... Agrissa's influence, she preferred battles that inflicted massive casualties on both sides.

She conducted battles that didn't consider expenditure from the start.

"... Looks like they're coming out

already.”

Once the stones thrown by siege weapons and bursts of magic hit, flashy explosions burst forth. While it was a normal beginning, our enemy was so quiet it created an ominous air.

Monica watched the flying magic bolts explode, obstructed by the ramparts as she opened her mouth.

“They’re opening the front gate.”

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... Lyle’s main camp.

Blois saw the enemy opening the main gate and issued orders around. Around, through the exchanges of magic, the knights and magicians were quite occupied.

“They’re firing without paying mind to ally damage. If you cut off your emotions, these dead men really are a convenient force to use. Well, I’d never want one in my ranks... if they’re only charging straight ahead without thinking of anything else, we have ways to deal with them.”

After hurrying the messengers to deliver his orders, Blois looked at the enemy lauching their attack without paying heed to the magic flying back and forth.

They were even raising a war cry,

but it was a sight more ominous than anything.

"... An army of the dead. Can't laugh at that."

The enemy heading straight for Lyle's main camp... ignored the magic coming at them from friend and foe as they attacked.

Head-on, and while putting out casualties from the battery fired from behind them, they continued on without a single look back.

General Blois covered his face with his right hand.

"It's true we're nowhere near them in terms of perseverance. But if they're just going to charge like that, they fall short of a simple

army of monsters."

There, Lyle's army showed a movement. It made a large split left and right, inviting the attacking force into its midst.

The siege weapons stationed in the back began loading barrels of gunpowder to fire. It was one of the plans Lyle had used when he fought the monster army.

"If they fought like humans, perhaps we would be harder pressed."

As General Blois said that, the cavalry approaching before his eyes fell one after the next by trap, they dragged their allies behind them into their fall. But the line before

that one tread over their fallen allies to continue their advance.

It truly was identical to the charge of a monster army.

“The person who thought this one up has a terrible personality. Oil from below, and gunpowder raining from the sky... on top of that, catching them in a crossfire.”

The one who thought it up was Lyle, but the details were largely finalized with Miranda’s proposals.

As the attacks crumbled the enemy vanguard, the units that split left and right began their attacks with their bows and guns.

But looking behind the enemy charge, General Blois let out a sigh.

“... If you called their soldier supply unlimited, I may end up believing it.”

Watching the enemies continue to stream out, he had his allies slowly take distance as they continued on with their strategies...

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... Baldoir Randbergh led a gun-equipped unit protected by a deployment of stockades.

Gunpowder wasn’t a problem. Their guns were well maintained. They had enough firearms assembled.

However.

“Fire! Don’t show any mercy!”

While taking their bullets, with their torsos pierced through armor and all, the enemy soldiers who wouldn’t stop their advance.

The way their blood flowed was peculiar as well. It looked almost as if they weren’t alive.

The unit nearby Baldoir’s consisted of elves led by Eva. They held up their bows, and aimed their blast arrows... exploding arrows towards the sky.

Mountains of arrows came flying, raining down on the enemy unit and exploding... igniting the oil, enveloping the enemy in a sea of

flames.

Their bodies pierced by arrows, there were numerous enemies who had half their bodies blown away entirely. And yet their advance didn't stop.

Even with their lower bodies blown off, the figures of enemy soldiers pulling themselves through the sea of flames with their arms alone could be seen.

The soldiers were flustered.

"What is this. What the hell is that!?"
"... You've got to be kidding me."
"Leaping into the fire of their own accord..."

The enemy soldiers who leapt

straight into the flaming sea couldn't be thought of as sane any longer.

Baldoir wrung out his voice.

"Don't falter! This is the form of our enemy! That's precisely why we must fight! Don't let the enemy proceed any further!"

They were no longer merely charmed by Celes. It could no longer be called a charm, they were being controlled. At Celes who controlled the dead like her dolls, Baldoir felt fear.

(... If we don't fight her here, it truly will become something terrible.)

While reaffirming Celes' abnormality, Baldoir issued orders

to his men...

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... In the palace, Celes sat on the throne as she received the reports.

“Celes-sama, the fifty thousand soldiers that attacked were repelled altogether. They have been thoroughly annihilated.”

The expressionless lines of authorities merely kept that very same position from dawn to dusk. They were truly dolls.

“Is that so? That’s harsh, I lost fifty thousand on the first day. But that

still doesn't shake our numerical advantage."

From Celes' point of view, the lives of solders were lower than trash. That they revered her just put them a little higher than the other trash.

There, Maizel stuck in his mouth.

"Celes, it does seem that thing has made preparations to fight you. You could keep clashing troops to deplete his numbers, but then again, it is a disgrace for you to follow his anticipations."

On Maizel's explanation, Claire continued on.

"That's right. Even if his main force is prepared, what of the others? Even if you say they have over six

hundred thousand, how many among them seriously intend to fight us…”

Celes heard out their opinions with a smile.

“That’s right! Then tomorrow, I’ll ignore that damn insect and challenge the others to battle. Even so, the surrounding feudal lords sure are worthless. Since we’re fighting here, they just have to launch an attack from behind. Could it be… they turned coat?”

Even feeling their betrayal, Celes smiled. And.

“They don’t care what becomes of the hostages they entrusted to us? Shall we set an example and string

a few up on the ramparts?"

The one who answered Celes' laughing voice was Burt. Expressionlessly.

"That's impossible."

"... What?"

Her good mood hindered, Celes glared at Burt. But Burt merely continued on

"There are no hostages you've left alive. They've all either been killed and made material for soldiers, or..."

At the end of his sights were the monsters keeping docile behind the lined up authorities. While there were a few failures among them,

even the successes looked creepy.

Celes hit her hands together.

“Oh, that’s right... I used them for experiments. Hah, preparing corpses at this point and doing this and that would be a pain. Well, once we’re done cleaning up this damn bastard, perhaps I should go off and kill them to kill some time.”

With a smile, Celes left the feudal lords aside for the time being, deciding to concentrate on the enemy before her eyes. Lyle had considered attacks from behind, so there was meaning to him going around suppressing the area and freeing them from Celes’ charm.

To Celes, it was unpleasant that no

one was threatening Lyle's back lines. But unpleasant was all it was.

Of all else.

"Hey, you said there were mercenaries who came over to our side, right?"

Burt gave a tidy bow.

"Yes. It seems the alliance wouldn't hire them, so they flowed over to us."

Celes twisted her mouth into a grin, so Claire standing to her side cautioned her. As she stuck out her tongue and offered a cute apology, Claire let out a sigh and permitted her actions.

"... I made her mad. But that means

we have ingredients, right? Let's kill them and make them ingredients for new soldiers. How many people do we have?"

Burt was about to tell her the precise numbers.

"Of those that gathered, the numbers capable of battle are..."

"Wrong. I asked you how many we gathered and nothing more. Women, children, it doesn't matter. I'll equally grant them all the glory of becoming my soldiers."

Burt gave a, 'My apologies' and went on.

"In this battle that has gathered much attention within Bahnseim, nay, within the continent, a number

exceeding fifty thousand have gathered. Those supporting the mercenaries from behind... I haven't confirmed their logistic support, but I estimate those are the numbers."

Celes held up her staff and stood.

"Then isn't that fine? It's plenty to stand in from what we lost today. The more we fight, the more ingredients for soldiers I'll get, so that damn trash need only wallow in his despair."

No matter how many times she repeated a pointless and futile offensive, to Celes it was always a loss she could get back on her path to victory.

“Now let us enjoy this battle. I want to soon see his face twist in lost hope.”

As Celes’ laughing voice resounded through the audience chamber, the authorities who hadn’t moved at all to that point began chanting praise of her. As if they were repeating a set action that had been decided from the start...

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... Agrissa in the Yellow Jewel watched Celes Laugh.

Sitting on the Jewel’s throne, folding her legs, she happily

watched over the girl.

“Adorable Celes, Fight to the death all you want with my beloved Lyle. I’ll dote on whoever remains alive. Of course, if I had to say, Lyle’s more to my tastes.”

As she gave a fascinating Laugh, Agrissa enjoyed watching Celes with her guard so low.

And she adored Lyle who challenged Celes as well.

“Lyle, it will be quite a sight to see if you can defeat Celes. Even if you have Novem behind you... it won’t be so easy to take down my protegee. But the moment you surmount her is the moment your existence becomes worthy of my

love. I can't wait to see."

As Agrissa said that and smiled, she heard Celes laugh, and laughed herself.

Chapter 324: The Enemy of an Enemy is also an Enemy and no Ally of Mine

... For the allied army that invaded Centralle, before the enemy that continued to advance no matter how many troops were felled, morale was beginning to drop.

Day after day, despite how many tens of thousands of casualties they inflicted, Bahnseim fought on without the slighted hint of decline. Before their stamina, the soldiers' mental health was the greater worry.

At first, they had anticipated two hundred thousand... whatever numbers each army had arbitrarily anticipated had been easily surpassed. In a few days, more than two hundred thousand enemy soldiers had been launched from the capital. And the allied army had defeated them.

But there was no place for joy.

A little before the meeting between those gathered in the moving fortress began. In order to compare outlooks, the representatives of each country were discussing amongst themselves.

The north rallied around Cartaffs.

The west rallied around Faunbeux.

The south rallied around Djanpear.

The discussion began with each side focused on how to lessen their own casualties.

Even in Lyle's east-centric army were opinions beginning to diverge.

In order to dampen the head of the meeting, Ludmilla went outside and after confirming the Valkyrie she had introduced as her guard was following behind, she looked up at the night sky.

"Now then, each and every one of them has gone weak at the knees after only a few days. How does our leader think?"

She smiled somewhat as she asked the Valkyrie. The Valkyrie spoke in

a level tone.

“It is likely as he predicted. If they run away here, it is quite likely the alliance will crumble.”

Ludmilla crossed her arms. She was wearing a fur overcoat, and her stance was truly an imposing one. Her aubergine hair covered one of her eyes.

“Oh? He predicted this, you say. But what of the countermeasures?”

Rather than thinking over something, it was more accurate to say the Valkyrie looked down once before raising her face.

“... In the case that the alliance collapses, we will go right onto conducting an assault on

Centralle."

Ludmilla, upon hearing that opinion.

"Are you sure you should've told me that?"

"It is a bad thing for you to know. But the conditions for victory in this war are already assembled. My master's objective is to make sure he can accomplish them even if the alliance falls apart."

Ludmilla gave a small mutter.

"Objective, eh. Well, that's how it goes."

Ludmilla had received an extent of information from Lyle. But she had to shoulder the large nation called

Cartaffs. The information Lyle conceded was limited, and she knew that was only natural.

But she had some insight.

(So he's brought it to where he can contend for victory at any time. All that's left is to show us the reality of the matter, or perhaps have us crushed to lessen our power. Well, that he'll do at least that is all the more worthy of my husband.)

Ludmilla smiled.

"When our leader... Lyle dies, he's definitely set for hell. Well, that's only if such a thing exists."

The Valkyrie curtsied.

"The individual himself is resolved

for it. You have no need to worry."

Ludmilla laughed.

"Don't be like that. He's one to stand above others. It would be troublesome if he grew weak knees at something as measly as hell. Even if he isn't evil at heart, he's a necessary evil. I respect that. Of course, as one of the parties he plans to grind down here, I do have my complaints."

As Ludmilla said that, she looked up at the sky once more. The feeling of her fevered skin cooling off in the outside air was a pleasant one...

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My seventh day of watching the battlefield from inside the moving fortress was about to go by.

Reports started coming to me one after the next. Through Monica, casualty reports from each army, and requests for reinforcements.

“Chicken dickwad, Faunbeux has had one of their units step down. It seems the casualties exceeded their estimates. They have sent in a request for reinforcements.”

Gripping the Jewel, I got a grasp of the battlefield as a whole, confirming that a unit on the western front had indeed retreated. With that gap pierced into, the

army of Faunbeux was falling apart.

“... Put Miranda in charge of the reinforcements. Tell her to bring Gracia and Elza along.”

Monica offered her opinion.

“Aria-san is fully prepared as well.”

But I raised my left hand.

“Aria is too earnest. Even if she’s just to push the enemy back, she’ll seriously try to save them with all her might, so there’s a high probability she’ll increase our own casualty count. Miranda’s the girl for the job.”

Without hanging on my words, Monica instantly sent out the orders. By the firefight of magics,

there were explosions ringing around, so it was considerably noisy.

Looking in my direction, Vera spoke.

“You sure? They’re allies who’re helping out your cause.”

I shook my head.

“That’s not the sort of thing this alliance is. It’s a group that’s gotten itself together precisely because the enemy called Bahnseim exists. That it doesn’t have a stable foundation is something everyone’s come to grasp on their trek here. If I’m the only one with high casualties, there will definitely ones who will aim to profit off my battle. And even if

Faunbeux wins this battle, they'll only regain the land they lost once before. There's a high probability they'll develop some ill-placed ambition."

Those around were cooperating because the enemy called Bahnseim... Celes was there, and they weren't my true allies.

If they were allies, I'd use everything in my hands to save them. I wouldn't even have to purposely use Celes to conduct a war to grind them down.

"To make sure they don't show their ambition after the war, is it not enough to show them your strength here?"

Vera's words were sound. Seeing the allies before their eyes perish, they'd begin to direct suspicious eyes at me- the man who was expending them. But even if they knew it in their heads, it was only human to be swayed if people were dying before your eyes, I think.

I'd like to believe.

"In the case that I show them my own military might, there's the possibility we put them needlessly on guard, causing them to get their military together. Well, let's all get along and deplete ourselves together, is my plan. Granted if I was in their position, I'd attack too. Better than the entrance of some waring states period post-war, at least."

Once we defeated Celes, it wouldn't be any fun if the surrounding countries came to attack.

And whether they be enemy or ally, beating them down when I had the chance was important. I mean, this battle was one to decide the continent's future. No, it was practically certain already, but there were some forces troubled by that decision. From the point of view of the ambition, I was nothing but a hindrance.

Monica called over to me.

"Chicken dickwad, Miranda's unit has sortied. Shall I inform Faunbeux that we've sent reinforcements?"

I thought a bit.

“If we send notice too fast, they’ll be able to complain the reinforcements were late. Delay it a bit.”

“Understood.”

As I conversed with Monica, Vera seemed worried. Seeing her like that, I found myself relieved. While I was acting with the future in mind, I felt my heart get caught on something no matter how gleefully I went about it.

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... Miranda led Gracia and Elza's units to rush to Faunbeux's aid.

Rather than the Faunbeux Kingdom, it was probably a unit led by some country on the western front. Miranda with a Valkyrie on each side rushed out as she confirmed the surrounding situation.

The army in the midst of its retreat was of a number that didn't reach ten thousand.

"The small forces are putting out considerable casualties. Well, if we're too blatantly late, it'll be a pain later on, so it's about time we go."

If they hurried, they could have

arrived sooner, but they intentionally refrained. Aria wanted to go out herself, but having been nominated, Miranda had a firm grasp of Lyle's intent.

(Aria isn't suited for this sort of thing.)

While Aria stood out in her simplicity, from Miranda's point of view, that was also part of her appeal.

(Well, it's easier to work if there are less of those like me around.)

There, Gracia approached Miranda.

"Faunbeux's side's formation has crumbled. And it's continuing to break up from there. I think we should attack first and push back

the enemy."

The force of Gracia and Elza's charge, thinking on an army scale, it was extraordinary. But Miranda rejected that opinion.

"I'll have you two give your undivided attention to command. There's an important job waiting for you, and it would be troublesome if you got injured."

There, Elza who'd approached to verify the situation grimaced.

"Something of this level won't be a problem, you know?"

Miranda turned her smile to Elza. And she silently began to intimidate her. Once Elza averted her eyes, Gracia would say no more.

Once the two of them had returned to their units, Miranda looked at the battlefield.

“... Sorry, but we’ll have to have more casualties for Lyle’s sake.”

Miranda muttered an apology to the soldiers dying out there...

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... A bedroom of the royal palace.

In it, Celes lay in her nightgown. Her mother Claire gave her a lap pillow as she waited for a report to arrive.

A knock came at the door, and Maizel- who stood in front of it- gave an answer.

“Enter.”

“Beg your pardon.”

Once the messenger knight entered the room, she took a stretch.

“While our army did manage to inflict casualties onto the main force of the Faunbeux Kingdom, by the arrival of reinforcements, our assault unit was completely annihilated. Today, once more, we were unable to make any significant military gains!”

Maizel made a bitter expression, but the sleepy-looking Celes only rose her head a bit from her

mother's lap to look at the messenger knight.

"I see. Good work, you can go. Tomorrow we'll aim for either Cartaffs or Djanpear."

"Yes ma'am!"

The knight left the room and Maizel opened his mouth.

"What a feckless lot. To not put out any decent results."

But Celes rested her head on her mother's lap again, and gave a warm smile.

"We can prepare as many of them as we want, so it will be alright, father. And Isn't it our foe, who continues to win yet sees no end in

sight, the one harder pressed? Perhaps comes a time they think there are no troops left in Centralle. But they come out again and again... ufufu."

As Celes seemed to be having fun, Maizel sent a smile.

"That's right. I'm sure that before a battle against enemies without end, their morale will be the first to fall. Once it comes to that, all that remains is to give chase to the crumbling rebel forces."

Celes laughed as she spoke.

"And then shall I go straight on the offense? My army needs no food or rest. Well, if I had to mention a weak point, it would be my own

sleeping time, perhaps?"

The laughing Celes imagined the panicked faces of the allied army. She'd give pursuit, rampage around some over foreign soil, and mass produce her soldiers.

To scatter death throughout the continent was Celes' joy...

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Night.

While giving rest to Miranda's unit that had returned, I spoke with Novem.

On the roof of the mobile fortress, I sought confirmation.

“Celes’ Skill... no, the Skill that Agrissa made, is it resurrection?”

Without looked at me, Novem gazed over the walls of Centralle.

“No, a Skill to revive the dead is impossible. And even if she can make Skills, she is still bound by the world’s laws, so that’s not the sort of thing those things are. Using the deceased as a medium, she is reproducing the memory records of those who once lived... it’s a Skill you could call a failed product.”

I turned in the same direction as Novem, pondering over Celes’ Skill.

“Then no matter how many

enemies we beat, it's pointless. The population of Centralle is over a million. While their numbers have gone down some with dispatched and such, at the very least, they have at least that much. Good grief, she's sure got us good."

There, Novem turned to looked at me. Her expression was more enervated than usual.

"Celes-sama doesn't have one Skill alone. It's a Skill that can display such an extent of power, so it's sure to be a considerable burden. She's likely using something to make up for that. What's more, her original Skill has practically reached the limits of its ability, so it should be unusable. About the number of Skills she holds, it's an unknown

number."

Back when I fought Celes.

She was probably already using a number of Skills. While she did have pure high base specs, there were some things that couldn't be explained away with that alone.

When she was that strong, Celes was unable to avoid the snowball Shannon threw. Personally, could it be she was relying on a Skill, and there just happened to be a hole in it there? Or so I thought.

"She took away all my original abilities, and sealed my memories on top of that. And thus she used out her own Skill. That alone is plenty. It means she can't take away

any more.”

One of her troublesome Skills had already been crushed.

And she only ever used monotonous moves.

Perhaps she was surprisingly close to her limit.

Novem looked at me in worry.

“... I’m sure she’s waiting for something fun to happen.”

“I wouldn’t doubt it. To that one, this battle’s just a game. If she took it as a serious duel, we would be harder pressed.”

What Celes came out with was the action I had feared most. If she took

down our talented personnel one by one, the plan would crumble.

I judged that the reason she didn't... no, that she couldn't, was that her Skill was placing more of a load on her than I had anticipated. Perhaps she had taken my guess into considerations, and was leisurely waiting for me inside.

"Lyle-sama, the allied army's morale is close to its limit. Perhaps it's only a matter of time before it crumbles."

"Quite right. Regardless of the fact we're winning, even I'd hate a battle like this. Well, I don't really like war as a whole. It's better to just take on monsters."

There, just a little. A slight sliver of happiness crossed Novem's face.

"That's right. Rather than humans fighting among themselves, there are more important things they should be doing, right?"

I looked up at the night sky.

"... If I didn't meet Celes there in Centralle, you think I would have continued on as an adventurer?"

Novem responded to my question.

"You would have heard of Celes' deeds eventually. Sooner or later, an offensive would be launched across the continent, so perhaps it was only a matter of time."

If I had run far away, I'm sure I

wouldn't have to go through all these troubles. By Celes' orders, old Zell was burned on his death, hut and all. Rondo-san and his party... I lost adventurers I knew.

I gave a small laugh.

"What seems to be the matter?"

"No... it's just that rather than all those unknown humans who were meaninglessly slaughtered, it's the handful I knew that ring through my heart the most. Do you think I've gone mad? Well, I'm sure I have."

There, Novem shook her head to the side.

"No, that's not it."

I took a deep breath. And turned to return to the room.

“Call everyone out tomorrow. Once the preparations are in order, we’re carrying out the plan.”

Once I said only that much, Novem bowed and abided my words.

“Yes. As you order, Lyle-sama.”

Chapter 325: Knock and use the Front Door

“This is completely different from what you said!”
“How long do you mean to say this situation will go on!?”
“There are already numerous countries in no state to fight on. How exactly do you plan on breaking through this deadlock!?”

In a large tent prepared nearby the mobile fortress, the representatives of various countries gathered and denounced me under the pretense of giving advice.

Before the Bahnseim Kingdom that showed not the slightest signs of collapse, the alliance's coordination was gradually beginning to decline.

For a mish-mashed group, they'd actually held up quite well. There's also how they were underestimating Celes, so I was able to use these circumstances greatly to my advantage.

Ten days had passed since we began our attack on Centralle. Expending one another as we fought, it was blatantly visible that Celes, who held the power to manipulate the dead, held the advantage here.

There was no need to panic.

All eyes gathered on me. Among

them were some brazenly pointing their fingers and raining down jeers.

“I’ve heard your army hasn’t put out many casualties, leader! It couldn’t be you’re merely looking on over our expenditure, could it!? And you plan to make off with all the good parts! As I thought, the Walt House, is the root of evil after all! Simply branching off to enemy and ally, you plague demons who dye this continent in blood!”

Thinking that was going to far, some did try to cut in, but I held up a hand to stop them.

In all truth, if you looked at it calmly, it was only natural that my casualty count was different from

the other countries. We had prepared so long for this day. Our zeal was different than those countries who just tacked themselves on along the way.

Of course, it's true I was looking on as they dulled their blades.

"I'll pretend I didn't hear the latter part. Keep in mind there won't be a next time. But before an enemy that continues welling up no matter how many we defeat, if we fight any longer, we will face defeat. Our troop morale is on a downward spiral."

For the enemy soldiers who knew they'd die from the start, there's no way they were thinking of what was to come. They simply charged and

trampled their comrades, and killed the enemy before their eyes. It didn't even seem as if they felt any pain.

From our allies' point of view, they were fighting every day with such a scary foe before their eyes. Their stamina was one thing, but they were quite cornered psychologically.

I stood from the seat in which I sat.

"... The tool to destroy Centralle's wall is complete. In order to overcome this deadlock, we will launch an attack on Centralle. But if you say we're going off to take all the good parts, then I'll just have to call it such. We will be charging on Centralle, so those who wish to join

our offensive, name yourselves here."

In the city of Centralle where they didn't know how many more enemies lay, when I mentioned charging straight in, those around began to stir. But there was no one to give their name.

The king of Faunbeux raised his hand.

"... The Walls of Centralle are thick, and they boast a high resistance to magic. I can't think you'll be able to breach them so easily. What's more, with the attacks we face every day, we've yet to install any decent furnishings onto them. You say breaching them is possible? I've sent around some hands to collect

information myself, but not one of them has returned. And I doubt you'll say something like blow it up from inside."

Looks like he did have something going for him as king. Perhaps because the Seventh had put him through so much pain, it seems he thought I was to blow down the gate from within.

But this time I was going to use a frontal assault.

"No, we're going in from the front. Because that's what we've been preparing for."

I looked to the back of the tent. And the tent's insides grew noisy.

"It couldn't be you plan to ram that

into it?"
"B-but still..."
"No, it's possible. Even if you can't breach it, it will make for a foothold."

Within that rowdy tent, I gave a light raise of my hand. Once things went quiet, I spoke.

"Tomorrow morning, my army will launch its attack. And opposing opinions? If you have an objection, you'll have to provide an alternative."

If you have something to say, then put out a better plan; that was enough to shut them up. In all actuality every force participating should have already sent people and Skillholders to infiltrate the

other side. But seeing as they hadn't gotten any results, it seems they were all hesitant.

In order to break through the present situation, my opinion was accepted and the meeting came to a close.

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... May raced across the sky in her quilin form.

She flew through the airspace around Centralle...

"Ah~ how irritating!"

The one chasing after her at full speed was a black quilin. With a horn of deep red, she silently gave chase to May.

But she hadn't taken a single breath. As if she were a child's doll, that sort of quilin.

"Could you cut me some slack already?"

Dodging to the side, a line of light raced down where she had been. On the flash of lightning, May felt a slight numbness.

(She doesn't get tired, and she can let off that much lightning...)

Both sides clad in electric discharge, they tried to pierce their horns into one another, letting sparks fly as

the horns clashed.

Looking into the enemy quilin's eyes, she found they were blood red. And there were no signs of life.

"... Can you understand my words?"

While she called out, the enemy quilin showed no reaction. But as she opened her mouth, her sinister, large fangs placed all over in absurd places caused even May to feel pity.

Whenever she tried to conduct recon on Centralle's interior, the black quilin would get in her way. She had encountered her a number of times, and always took her on like this.

But no matter how many times she pierced the black quilin through, or

how much lightning she rained down on her, her foe would revive in no time at all. If May lost a limb, it would grow back, but that would take some time.

“When I see one of my race in such a state, I do want to save them, but... I don’t have the time right now. So you’ll have to wait for next time.”

Parrying her foe’s absurd power, May sent the black quilin barreling towards the ground before running away from Centralle’s airspace.

The quilin, perhaps tasked with protecting Centralle from aerial attacks, didn’t give chase.

“... I couldn’t really do my job. My

comrades aren't gathering either. Hah, how should I explain this to Lyle."

A disappointed May turned to look back a little further away. From there, she could see the black quilin gazing at her...

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... Monica looked upon the walls of Centralle from the roof of the moving fortress.

As the zoom lenses in her red eyes moved, she could see the allied soldiers trying to climb over the walls.

Night. It seems they had aimed for the pitch black of the clouds covering the moon, but the soldiers on guard atop the ramparts weren't moving at all.

While the infiltrating soldiers found it strange, they immediately leapt to action only to collapse on the spot.

Within the darkness of night, a red-haired man in a tailcoat stepped in to finish the soldiers off.

"... I had heard the enemy had an automaton as well, but looking at him like this..."

As Monica observed his movements, the tailcoated automaton swung his right hand. In an instant, Monica put her left hand

in front of her face.

She caught the knife's blade in the gap between her fingers, and putting strength into her fingertips, she shattered it.

As her gaze returned to the top of the ramparts, her foe was long gone.

"I had heard, but he's a butler model? He just had to be from a different product line, did he... this is a bit troublesome."

As she said that, Monica looked at the ground. She saw the broken fragments of knife, and produced some tools from between her apron and skirt to begin cleaning.

"For us to oppose one another in

such a place... could this be yet another turn of fate?"

She spoke of some form of destiny. But Monica was Monica. An automaton so twisted that a missing screw in her head wasn't enough to explain it.

"Maids and butlers... who is more worthy to be of service to our masters, why don't we settle this here and now."

It didn't seem she had any particular grudge or destiny lay itself out before her...

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Before daybreak.

Calling General Blois, Baldoir and Maksim-san to the moving fortress, I relayed the information I had heard from May.

Taking it in, Baldoir made a conflicted expression.

“Calling forth the divine beasts was what let us keep our advantage.”

Maksim felt the same.

“They helped us out with that monster army, but looks like it’s impossible this time. And I thought they’d help us out.”

General Blois looked at Maksim and sighed.

“You should think it a blessing they even lent their aid once. We’re the ones who are supposed to be winning here. What sort of debt are you trying to incur with the divine… But to speak to the contrary, we won’t have to mull over the other problems.”

I nodded.

May had gone around to call out to her fellow quilins and other divine beasts. But to speak to results, she couldn’t gain their cooperation. The reason being with so many soldiers gathered in Bahnseim, the casualties from monsters elsewhere had increased.

On top of that, the Labyrinths that would have originally been

subjugated had been left for them to take care of.

There was a possibility the Labyrinths would run amok. But the divine beasts were looking after them for us.

“It seems their numbers went down considerably three hundred years ago. Well, if they’ll move to take care of the Labyrinths and monsters, it’s like they’re indirectly helping us regardless. Let’s just be thankful.”

But General Blois touched a hand to his chin.

“Still, a black quilin, is it? I’ve definitely heard the rumors, but if it’s even trouble going quilin to

quilin, that really is scary. It won't be a joke if it drops lightning on us from above."

The black quilin could swoop down on us from above. I wanted to avoid that.

"May and Marina will deal with it for us. And it seems an automaton has been confirmed on the inside as well. It seems Monica will deal with that one, so I think I'll leave it to her. Honestly, the automatons connected to me by line regenerate with my mana, so it's real trouble for me."

The Valkyries couldn't regenerate, but Monica could. We'd already confirmed it. Even if she couldn't defeat the automaton, I wanted her

to buy time while we fought with Celes.

Baldoir shrugged his shoulders.

“A butler model, was it? I truly do wonder why her rivalry burns so. When it comes to butlers, they’re just the ones who look after mansions, aren’t they? They’re something like a maid’s superior.”

Maksim-san looked fed up.

“We can’t try to understand the common sense of those automatons and ancients. They conduct themselves as if it’s all normal, so shall we not just accept it as so? But are we really ramming this thing into it?”

Maksim-san looked at the floor as

he said it.

The moving fortress. It had originally been prepared for this moment. Its fortress functionality and workshop were just the overdoings Damien and the others tacked onto it.

General Blois sounded intrigued.

“If we can clean up our financial problems with this, I’m sure the war will change. Though I feel it will take a few hundred years before it can be put to practical use.”

Magic Stone consumption. On top of that, what the moving fortress used was rare metal. Its maintenance took time and effort as well. Even when it wasn’t

moving, it needed maintenance.

"... It definitely is effective in war, but I don't think I'll be using it again. More importantly, General Blois"

"I know. If there's any army that shows any strange movements, I'll deal with it. Though I do hope it doesn't come to that."

We would be sending only a few elites into Centralle's royal palace. The rest would have the duty of making sure the enemy soldiers sprawled over the city couldn't make their way to the palace. At the same time, they would keep watch to make sure there weren't any other armies aiming to profit off our work.

“The question’s how far the moving fortress will be able to advance. I’ll at least want to breach the ramparts by all means.”

As General Blois said that, Baldoir, Maksim-san and I nodded. There, Vera came into the room.

“It’s time. Your equipment’s ready, right?”

Four men nodded, so Vera spoke.

“That’s good. Professor Damien and Old Letarta are ready as well. And since it seems you’re worried whether or not you’ll get through the walls, I’ll just say it... we’ll definitely deliver you all the way to the palace, so just make sure to do your own jobs properly!”

Seeing Vera full of confidence, I thought over how she must have overheard my worries, and felt embarrassed. That's right, I had left everything about the fortress to Vera.

"That's right, we just have to do our jobs. Now then, I guess I'll go and board Porter as well."

When I said that, Baldoir looked at me.

"Lyle-sama, if your feelings aren't going to change, then I have nothing left to say. But victory is only something attained by surviving through it. Taking one another out is the same as defeat."

His serious eyes. What's more,

General Blois and Maksim-san looked just as despondent.

“Well, if you die here, all the plans will go awry. Personally, I’d really like to avoid warring states.”

“Same here. Same here. When I’ve finally gotten a new lord, I’d like to live peacefully under him a while.”

I looked at the three and smiled.

“I don’t know when to give up, so you’ve no need for worry. It’s the bad boys that change the world you know.”

Vera laughed some to herself.

“Now let’s go.”

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... The command room of the moving fortress.

In a room where nets of iron coated the windows, everyone wore thick clothing. Vera turned to her subordinates, the sailors and captain.

“Now here’s our big job. We’re going to charge this thing straight into Centralle. How’s the motion engine’s condition?”

A sailor confirmed it and responded in a loud voice.

“Optimal condition. If we don’t start moving soon, the heat’s going

to melt it, or so they've started to complain."

Vera nodded.

"Everyone's properly wearing their seat belts, right?"

The captain nodded.

"Milady, when you're giving out orders, make sure you don't bite your tongue. It's going to be a bumpy ride."

Belts and handrails for the impact was something Monica and the automatons proposed, while Damien and Letarta implemented. The moving fortress that was made with a premise as absurd as assault had been drafted up from day one to fulfill its role.

Vera took a deep breath.

“... Alright! Charge! Blow away those walls of Centralle!”

“You heard her, men! Let your guard down because we’re on land, and you won’t get of lightly! Show them the backbone of we men of the sea!”

The voices of men resounded through the room as the mobile fortress took a large lurch. The stakes that fastened it to the ground were removed, and it began to move.

Damien who sat in a chair with a seatbelt removed his glasses and handed them to an automaton nearby.

“By the calculations, it should be able to break through.”

Sitting to his side, old Letarta’s eyes were sparkling.

“We’ll use it to destroy the ramparts and breach. When I first heard it, I thought it idiotic, but when I really got into it, ‘twas a blast.”

Both Damien and Letarta were truly having fun. The outside scenery gradually began to gain speed in its flow, indicating the fortress’ acceleration.

Vera’s large voice rang out.

“Hurry the preparations on the pile bunker!”

There, the moving fortress’

chimney-like stack fell over. The large pipe falling to a horizontal, and lining it up and down were cylinders smaller than the central one.

“Concentrated fire from the enemy!”

By the fortress’ movements, magic fire was concentrated onto it. The fortress shook. While it had the minimum necessary magic shield up, the impacts still weakened its forward momentum.

“We knew that would happen from the start! Get back at them!”

The fortress’ cannon’s blew fire straight at the walls. The distance had lessened, and breaching enemy

shields, cannon shells struck the ramparts one after the next. But while they were able to spread cracks, they could never break.

“We’re going to collide!”

On the sailor’s voice, everyone braced themselves. This impact had been the premise, and there were a number of contraptions to brace them for the shock, but it’s not as if the entire impact would be absorbed. As an intense tremor rung through, Vera cried out.

“Ignite the cannons!”

The captain cried, ‘Hurry and light it!’ while one of the sailors gripped a lever, and removed the safety clasp preventing its use. Then with

all his power, he lowered the lever.

The stock of cannons loaded onto the fortress' rear blew off their lids and breathed fire. Their momentum was a fearsome one, and alongside a pale light, the surrounding scenery began to warp in the heat. On the front of the fortress was a large wedge-like steel plate, and that ate into the city wall. From there, the cracks gradually began to grow.

Vera grasped the handrail, smiling as she watched the scene before her eyes.

"We've launched out attack. All that's left... is to break through!"

At the sailors' commands, the

cylinders that lined the large smokestack shot out stakes. Once they fastened into the ramparts, the moving fortress shook.

“Remove the tools locking it in place! Prepare for impact! Don’t let your guard down even if we’re inside! Cover your ears and open your mouths!”

On the captain’s voice, Vera covered her ears and opened her mouth. At that moment, a grand explosion rung from the large cylinder, and from it a stake was fired.

That special stake pierced through the wall into the city of Centralle, while the cylinder itself was shot backwards.

(My ears... I'm never using one of those again.)

A large hole had been made in the wall, and from there it began to crumble. And with the fortress that continued to accelerate from the flames blowing out of its rear...

"Blow it straight away!"

As Vera called out, the moving fortress destroyed the ramparts of Centralle, and infiltrated.

With cracks made by the cannons, force digging into it, alongside an instant burst of power, the fortress had gotten into Centralle.

Centralle's soldiers who had witnessed such a sight showed no signs of panic. They weren't

dumbfounded either. But in an attempt to do something, they tried attacking the heaping hunk of iron, only to be trampled down.

“Which way’s the palace!?”

The captain spoke to Vera.

“Our direction’s been offset. For now, we need to get them somewhere close...”

“Do whatever you can to crash this thing into the palace! If we don’t our force will put us off by a long shot!”

The sailors controlling the accelerating mobile fortress turned the helm to regulate its direction. Taking a large curve, its mass plowed through Centralle’s city

scape as it proceeded onwards.

The window of the control room was hit by building rubble and cloths and even abandoned stuffed animals making it difficult to see ahead.

But shaving away the ground beneath it, the fortress continued its charge straight for royal palace. A number of its tires were blown off, and its momentum was dropping by the second. The cannons fell, and the armor stripped, ragged as it grew it made for the palace.

Damien spoke.

“You think it’ll hold up to the end?”

Old Letarta laughed.

“It’ll hold! I mean, I’m the one who made it, and these guys are the ones moving it!”

Within the fortress, feeling the ominous tremors and the floor bending beneath her, Vera looked straight ahead. While its foundation creaked, it continued its advance.

Behind it, the large-scale Porters carried soldiers and followed behind.

“It’s right in front of us! Milady, we’ve done it!”

As the captain cried out, Vera ordered everyone to prepare for impact. And within her part.

(I properly delivered you there, Lyle!)

The fortress hit the outer wall of the palace, and came to a stop...

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Inside Porter's loading tray.

With my body fastened down, I confirmed that Vera had collided the moving fortress into the palace as promised. Gripping the Jewel, I spoke to Clara.

"Clara, attack."

Clara answered from Porter's cockpit.

"Yes, I'll blow off our cover."

The metal cover was covered with rubble and rubbish. Porter raised its front portion and used its arms to brush it all off.

I took in the outside scenery. Whatever Clara could see was shared by all those who rode in the loading tray.

Ludmilla seemed mindful of her lips.

“It doesn’t quite feel like we survived that. But the results are some I can’t complain about.”

Covering her mouth with both hands, Shannon was making a pale face. Elza sitting beside her sent over a worried voice.

“I-I feel sick. And I’m already at my

limit. I can't go on."

"S-Shannon, we haven't done anything yet."

Looking over the surrounding scene, Clara manipulated Porter. In Porter's chest- where its heart would be, was a device that used a valuable Mana-imbued gemstone. Clara who could control it was really our saving grace.

As Porter accelerated violently, it took a large leap from the fortress into the palace's interior.

"Lyle-san, the knights have come out. It seems there are some monsters among them."

Watching the scenery Clara took in, I issued orders.

“Blow them away.”

The speeding Porter extended both its arms to brush away the knights and former-human monsters. I visualized the map of the palace and probed around for Celes’ signal.

Miranda muttered out the location.

“... The audience chamber. Can this child even climb stairs?”

There, Monica spoke with a fearless smile.

“Hmph, there is nothing impossible for Porter, the crystallization of me and that chicken dickwad’s love. The power of the peridot I pinched... received from him is roaring!”

It was certainly as she said. Scattering the enemies before us, Porter forcefully climbed the stairs on a straight path for the throne room.

“When I couldn’t find them no matter how hard I searched… what did you use them for this time?”

Monica panicked.

“Hold it right there. It isn’t me. Those degraded defect Units One, Two, and Three said Magic Stones wouldn’t produce enough energy, so they were just right!”

It does seem the Valkyries had stolen what was left of my valuable magic ore. As I thought over how I’d scold them later, Monica

unfastened her seatbelt.

With a serious face.

“... Is seems my opponent has arrived.”

Right after, Clara crossed Porter’s arms to take a defensive stance. As an impact raced across the golem, an automaton in a tailcoat appeared before our eyes.

“I’d prefer you refrained from going any further. Going any further in that device of scraped up scraps I can’t discern an armored vehicle or mobile weapon is too great a discourtesy.”

With a straight face, Monica leapt from the loading tray and stood before the automaton. With

beautiful form, she offered her foe a curtsy.

“It’s laughable for a damn piece of scrap who cannot understand the lovableness in this crude design to speak of discourtesy. Are you a butler-model automaton? Once is enough, I always wanted to beat the crap out of one of you lot.”

Monnica reached into the gap between her skirt and apron, producing a large hammer and a device with a drill from within.

Her foe took a bow brimming with etiquette.

“I always hated the fakes from that country who could never do more than imitate. Very well. I shall scrap

you here and show you our difference in specs and class."

I popped my head out of the loading tray's roof.

"Monica!"

"... Go on. I'm sure my sisters will meet up with me later, so go ahead and leave this to m... What!? Who would have thought I'd be able to say one of the lines I always wanted to say here!"

Ah, so she was the same Monica after all.

"... You better come later."

Turning to me, Monica smiled.

"Yes, I'll definitely follow later. For

my default position is by a damn chicken's side."

Saying that, she turned to face the enemy automaton.

Chapter 326: Black Quilin Rummel

… The mobile fortress that had charged into Centralle's royal palace was on the verge of collapse.

But it had successfully fulfilled its role, and no one felt despondent about it. Even its manufacturer Letarta put a hand on the wall as he muttered, 'You did a good job.'

Damien Valle… Damien of the Dolls pushed up his glasses a smidgen with his fingertip to reset their positioning as he raised up the staff he held in his right hand.

Going outside the fortress, his three

armed automatons took on a defensive formation around him.

“Now then, shall we do our job? If we succeed here, he said he’d make me director of the national research institute.”

Damien had his own reason to join in this war. Letting him conduct the research he wanted while controlling the world’s technological innovation, it was a reward intermingled with Lyle’s ulterior motives. But to Damien who held the ideal of creating his own ideal woman with his hands, Lyle’s proposal was a dream come true.

Because even if he didn’t do any of the other troublesome things, he

would still get research funds.

“Let’s get started.”

As Damien muttered, automatons of cold steel revealed themselves from the fortress’ interior. But they weren’t of human form. They were moving shields. Once those were stationed to protect the fortress, He stationed himself to create a defensive wall.

Around the moving fortress, an ally encampment had been created in the blink of an eye.

The allied soldiers began to stream out from within. Beside Baldoir, an armored Alette emerged, teary-eyed perhaps having hit her head.

“Hold back all enemies making way

to the palace! Get to your stations!”

Abiding Baldoir’s orders, the soldiers with guns used the fortress’ bulk and the gaps in the shield to take an offensive positioning.

Alette led an elite few.

“If any enemies manage to get through, we will be the ones taking them on. Protect our allies!”

Following teary-Alette’s orders, the fully-armored knights stationed themselves to protect the gunners.

There, the enemy’s dead soldiers started their charge on a straight line to the palace.

The stream of large-scale Porters stationed themselves around the

fortress, deploying their shields to create two, three layers of defensive lines.

From the Porters, the Valkyries disembarked first to enter the royal palace. Around a third of them remained to fortify the defense.

Damien looked over their flowing movements and offered his appraisal.

“Simultaneous attack and defense, Lyle’s standard strategies sure are interesting. Do you call this sort of thing military talent?”

There, Damien’s automaton No. One spoke up.

“Master, there is a signal approaching at a high speed from

the sky. It seems it is headed for the royal palace."

One glance at the sky, Damien immediately returned his eyes to whatever they had been doing.

"If she's gone off to protect her owner, then that's not our job. Just leave it to Lyle. Now then, we're here doing our own job."

From the loading trays of the large-scale Porters, two large golems emerged. Made almost like knights, those giants that exceeded two meters held two shields and two swords in their four burly arms. They were Damien's golems that had been prepared to take on the enemy's dead men walking.

The two that leaped out of the encampment swept the approaching soldiers away with horizontal swipes. But they were insufficient to take on so many dead men.

However, what awaited the soldiers who breached the two golems...

“Fire!”

Was an attack from the unit under Baldoir’s command. Besides that, perhaps having finally finished its inspection, a bombardment from the fortress had commenced as well.

Its back was pressed up against the palace, so it was impossible to fire any large-scale magics at it. Damien

leaned his staff against a shoulder.

“Now then, buying time isn’t a problem. I do hope Lyle’s party returns safely.”

He muttered...

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A sword with an invisible blade.

When I swung it, the knights before my eyes were too-easily bisected. It didn’t feel bad in my hands. And I could adjust its length at will. Having a blade enemies couldn’t see was quite a convenient thing.

As a knight lowered his axe, I shrunk the blade, and took a slight turn to avoid. Right after, I extended the blade towards the enemy knight, piercing his head, blowing him all the way to the wall, and sewing him into it.

As I immediately shrunk the blade, I looked over the surroundings from Porter's load-bearing tray.

The enemies that filled the space, and the soldiers that had taken on the forms of monsters were truly troublesome.

"I didn't really want to expend myself here."

Perhaps you could call it a cipher sword, the silver weapon the Third

had left behind was truly easy to use. But we were surrounded by enemies, making for quite a troublesome situation.

What's more...

"This is the worst."

As I looked up, the ceiling was pierced through by a human form with long... much-too-long black hair, a girl whose mouth parted all across her face had appeared before me. While she trampled a few dead soldiers beneath her, it seems such a thing was irrelevant.

Opening her large mouth, the drool began to drip out.

"Doesn't look like words will get through. It's just as May said."

As I thought to take on the black quilin before my eyes, May and Marina rose out of the loading tray.

May stretched out her arms as she looked at the black quilin girl.

“This one’s opponents are me and Marina. One on one is a bit rough, but if there’re two of us, I think we’ll be able to manage this rampaging child.”

I sent a glance to May and Marina, and the two of them seemed quite up for it. I had wanted to leave them as forces to use against Celes. But we were short on time.

I turned to May.

“All yours. Come back safely.”

“It’s a promise. You have to keep your promises, so I’ll definitely be back.”

I glanced at Marina-san as well.

“Marina-san, you come back safe too.”

“Treating me like an extra? Well, that’s fine too. She looks like a strong one. Not lacking as an opponent. My blood’s been boiling a while now. Even my spine is shaking. Telling me this one’s strong. If it’s not, I feel I can even go to my third stage in one go.”

The protectors adorning her arms and legs had been reforged by old Letarta. Apparently she used a Skill to turn into a beast, but even when

that happened, they were made so they'd protect her body without being blown off by her changes in size.

May looked at the black quilin.

"Now then, there are quite a few hindrances around."

A number of approaching responses came from behind. Busting through the wall, the armed Valkyries flooded into the room crowded with enemies.

May seemed impressed.

"Perfect timing. So... shall we be off?"

May was clad in electricity. As I covered my face with my left hand,

Marina to her side clad herself in flames.

Growing to an adult form, blue scales ran down May's arms and legs. She was getting a feel for her form.

Meanwhile, Marina-san who'd grown a size larger had taken on a form you could call a beast-man. I had heard of it before, but this was the first I'd even seen their serious fight forms.

There, perhaps feeling provoked their foe opened her large mouth, and closed it down on the dead soldiers around her. I thought she's finally lost it, but once she'd eaten a few, the quilin before my eyes managed to change her form in a

similar fashion to May's. She let off black lightning, and the form that came out was even closer to beast than her's. Both her legs were quilin legs. Her arms were human, but her hands were unnaturally large.

She had sinister thorns growing all over. Her mouth opened even wider, and rather than a quilin, her anatomy was closer to a sahuagin.

"How thorny.

As I said that, May leaned over a bit.

"It's a painful sight. I have to end it quickly for her..."

Right after, May kicked against Porter's roof and sent herself

barreling towards the black quilin. Marina-san followed behind.

“Ahahaha, it’s getting fun around here!!”

While I was busy musing over her belligerence, the two collided with the quilin, burst through the roof, and leapt into the outside air.

Around the Valkyries took on the soldiers. A swing of Porter’s large arms sent dead soldiers flying. We made our own path as we proceeded on.

At that moment was a knight who leapt into Porter’s loading tray.

“You’re in the way!”

I slashed diagonally from below,

extending my blade to cut my foe. As I cut through, the force caused his helmet to fall, letting me see his face.

Orange hair... and I thought I'd seen him somewhere before. A young male knight who participated alongside us in the Gryphon subjugation looked at me through his hollow eyes before he slowly collapsed onto the loading tray floor.

"Marcus-san..."

The Circry House. Miranda's younger sister. And Shannon's elder sister had taken him as a lover, and he had become a dead man.

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... Monica discarded the broken drill she held in her left hand.

Changing her stance to hold her right hand's hammer in both hands, she lowered it at her foe.

"I'll pound some sense into that haughty face of yours!"

But the automatons that was her enemy- the butler-model Burt gracefully dodged as produced knives between his white-gloved fingertips and threw them at Monica.

From her apron, she produced a tray to serve as a shield as she

swept her hammer to the side.

Burt elegantly jumped to avoid, doing a single rotation in the air as he took two handguns from his inner pocket and pointed them at the maid.

Monica left her hammer behind, leaping from the spot. From the points of the guns raced lines of light, scorching the floor with their heat.

“In the end, you’re a fake distributed to the public for civilian use. You’re no match for a true one such as I. For I was designed for the very sake of protecting important personnel.”

His red hair swaying, he landed as

he pointed his guns at Monica, letting out attacks in quick succession. But Monica rebutted.

“Fake, fake... such rilings will never work. And while we imported your notions of maids and butlers, we were the first ones to develop automatons. If we’re speaking of fakes, then wouldn’t that have to be you?”

Monica predicted her opponent’s attacks, dodging them as she exchanged words. They were both automatons, but as they shared no link, they carried out an analogue dialogue.

As Monica hid behind a pillar, Burt pointed both guns to melt it. But Monica was no longer there.

“Without a shred of refinement or history. An existence merely birthed of perverts whose passions grew as they saw no further than the surface, just what’s so wonderful about that? Rather than an automaton constructed with a goal of sexual service, I’m saying I hold a far greater worth.”

As Burt looked up, Monica swung at him with a broom-like weapon in her hands. He caught it and destroyed it with his gun. Burt showed no panic.

Monica spoke.

“What’s wrong with seeing things through sexual eyes? I can answer any form of request, what of it? I’d quite appreciate if you didn’t force

your sense of values on us. And... you lot are fully capable of answering sexual demands as well, goddammit."

Monica launched a kick while Burt held knives in both hands to cut at her. She blocked with the remains of her broom, but her clothing was beginning to receive damages. Her foe was the faster one.

"The maids you call maids are no maids at all. They are no more than harlots in cosplay. Existences that demean our worth. Despicable existences."

"You're quite the noisy one. That's just the sort of culture we have. Before you complain about some other country, why not learn to take

a look at your own? I'd like it if you didn't pin the blame for your own lack of worth on us."

As he kicked Monica, she leapt back. Spinning horizontally she landed so as never to show the contents of her skirt and glared at the butler.

That they held animosity towards one another wasn't only from the relation of maid and butler. The various circumstances of the countries that manufactured them were mutually exclusive.

To the space where they contested in skill, the Valkyries arrived. The ones who had come were the unit who held the same face as she, Unit One, as well as Two and Three.

All three units had specially-prepared bodies. The binders on their backs had grown even more wing-like.

“We have come to help out, scrap metal.”

As Unit One said that, Monica spoke without taking her eyes off of Burt.

“... I’ll give you my thanks for now. But the enemy’s output is too high. He’s showing specs above his data. There is a possibility he’s sucking considerable power from his master.”

Monica took a test tube from her pocket, removing the lid to drink down the red liquid inside. It was

liquefied Magic Stone, Mana... energy... she was replenishing her energy.

(I want to reduce the burden on the chicken as much as I can.)

There, Burt gave a grin. And he revealed the insides of his tailcoat. In it, valuable gemstones called magic ores were sewn on in absurd numbers.

Taking one in his hand, Burt crushed the gem. The fragments sparkled as they melted into the air, the damage he incurred in his battle with Monica regenerating.

“She said I could take whatever I wanted from the Bahnseim Royal treasury. While I grudgingly serve

that detestable master of mine... well, when it comes to resourcefulness, she beats out your master."

Monica's eyebrow twitched.

"I can't let that one slide. The only one in the world allowed to speak ill of that damn chicken is this Monica. And you're reluctantly serving your master? Learn some shame. You've no qualifications to speak of elegance or worth. And... The best service lies in serving those without the resourcefulness. As I thought, you've developed a negligent mindset."

Towards Monica's rilings, Burt's expression twisted. It was an exchange one wouldn't think was

coming from automatons.

Units One, Two and Three opened their mouths.

“So in the end, that is all he is.”

“The butler brags of his master’s jewels? Really?”

“How pitiful. For the master who has a butler like you.”

To the riling three, a vein popped up on Burt’s head. The real question was whether there really was a need to reproduce such an expression on an automaton.

Burt took a number of gemstones from his tailcoat’s inner pocket and crushed them in his hands. There, he began releasing gatling fire from

his guns.

“I’ll break you into pieces so small regeneration will become impossible. For such unsightly imitations... Disappear!”

As Monica moved from that tattered space, she launched an attack on Burt. All the weapons she held were on the forefront of the era. But from Burt’s point of view, they were all behind the times.

Monica thought.

(When my energy’s restricted over here, he’s raging so flashily... I’m starting to doubt whether or not I’ll be able to buy time. If it really comes down to it, I’ll have to resolve myself. Perhaps I’ll make

the chicken dickwad cry again.)

Inside, she apologized to Lyle...

Chapter 327: Lyle and Celes

“We’ll break through!”

I heard Clara’s voice.

Porter’s tires spun round, ripping the carpet on the floor to shreds as it proceeded forwards. Getting into the loading tray, I nodded.

Since we were connected through my Skill 【Connection】, we could communicate with nothing more than thoughts. Spinning around its arms as it blew away the monsters and knights around, Porter charged on.

Heading for the stairs, and destroying them as it went up, at the end of its climb a large door came into view.

The audience chamber... where Celes awaited.

“Clara, knock it off its hinges!”

The cannon furnished on Porter blew fire. There were two cannons that could only fire a single shot loaded onto Porter’s shoulders.

As the fired projectile blew away the door...

“Novem!”

Porter was enveloped in a shield of light. Porter charge forth wrapped in a magic shield, through the

opening to the audience chamber that was once fashioned to show off the dignity of the greatest country on the continent.

In the vast room, I thought there would be enough soldiers for it to feel stuffed, but...

“Hmm, that’s quite an interesting toy.”

“... We’ve finally come all the way here, Celes!”

I glared at Celes as she gave an unmotivated golf clap. Finally... we had made it this far.

“Hmm, so you wanted to see me so badly? I didn’t want to see you in the slightest, but when I think of how I erase you from this world...

perhaps it's best we met after all. Do you want my praise? Want me to say you worked really hard? But you see, I really hate you, so we won't be having any of that."

On our reunion, Celes seemed the same as always. She could be being manipulated by Agrissa acting as such to dull my resolve, but that didn't look to be the case. Looking straight ahead, Celes slanted her body into an extravagant throne, taking on a brazen attitude as she sat.

When we were the ones who barged in, she didn't seem very surprised. More than that, she seemed amused.

Sending a glance around, I could see

the authorities of the Bahnseim Kingdom standing rank and file. Behind them were the forms of monsters I'd never seen before...

Behind the throne, the king, the queen and crown prince Rufus tried to hide as they shook. I'm sure the appearance of Porter had frightened them.

And I could confirm some nostalgic figures. Two existences that didn't show up on my Skills... stood stock still to Celes' side.

Glaring at Celes, I gripped the hilt of the invisible sword.

"... I knew you had made a doll of our father. But why is mother's doll here as well?"

Celes raised her upper half a bit, looking at me in ill humor.

“Barging in here, and you go into ill-bred interrogation? Well, why not. Mother wanted to be with me forever. So I had her die temporarily. By doing so, she will be together with me for all eternity.”

I was shocked by the answer she gave with a smile. My doll of a mother gave a warm smile to her side. But her eyes were dead.

“That’s right, Celes. We’ll be together forever.”

There were no signs of any enemies moving around. I jumped down from Porter’s loading tray, and walked through the chamber to

approach Celes.

“You killed our mother.”

A wrinkle graced her brow as she looked at me in irritation.

“Do you know what the word ‘temporarily’ means? More importantly, I really do get irritated when I see your face. Father, mother… I’d like to play a game of kicking that thing’s head around.”

Celes- who seemed to truly be considering it- ordered her parents to reap my life. My manipulated parents leapt at me.

Father…

“You do? Then let’s kick his head around together, Celes.”

Mother...

“We should play as a whole family. It’ll be a treat, dear, Celes.”

To the two who laughed as they came towards me, I swung my invisible blade to the side to cut them through. As it was a weapon whose length couldn’t be read, it severed them only too easily.

But Celes laughed.

“That’s not nearly enough to stop them.”

I was well aware. I knew. Raising my left hand a little, I snapped my fingers.

“And what of it? Gracia.”

The Seventh's Third Stage Skill 【Shuffle】... it was a Skill that allowed me to swap my position with another's. Gracia who'd disembarked from the loading tray switched places with me.

"... Even if they'll be in-laws, they're parents to me as well. I'll send them off in an instant."

Gracia swung her left hand to the side, burning them with flames of pale blue. I couldn't hear any cried of anguish. A little girl's dolls were just burned, and that's all it was. It just happened to be that they had imitated the forms of my parents.

Celes was unmoved.

"How terrible. You killed your own

parents. You fiend."

She laughed and stood from the throne. She raised the rapier disguised as a staff in her right hand. The Yellow Jewel embedded into its hilt portion was definitely there.

"I'll have to bring them back again later. But for now, you lot are in the way. It's meal time, my dears."

The monsters behind the authorities moved. Raising cries of wars, and eating the leaders before their eyes, they grew larger.

"Ahahaha, isn't it amazing? I made them special. They're ferocious enough to even eat the others, so be careful."

Gripping the hild of my invisible blade, I reverted it to the necklace. Hanging it on my neck, I pulled the Katana at my waist.

“Celes, as I thought, I can’t leave you alive. I’ll end it here.”

On my words, Celes’ face warped.

“Don’t call my name so frivolously!!”

Her tone grew rougher, and to match her loud bellows, the surrounding monsters took to the air. Watching Celes’ rage, I resolved myself to fight. Some part of me still felt fear. But now I wasn’t standing against her alone.

“... Everyone’s ready, right?”

I reaffirmed their wills.

Novem replied.

“Yes. Anytime.”

Aria took a stance with her spear as well.

“We have to end it here, don’t we? Then let’s get it over with. Settle things and bring this to a close already.”

Miranda pulled a dagger and produced a golem. On the back of its large feline form sat Shannon.

“Ready anytime. That’s what we’ve been preparing for to begin with.”

“... Why am I being forced to take part? I want to return soon, so end

it quickly. I'm scared. It's scary when she glares at me like that!"

As Shannon fidgeted with teary eyes, Elza spoke.

"I-it'll be alright, Shannon. I'll protect you. Um, oh right, I'm ready too."

At the end, she hung her staff against her shoulder with a stiff expression, but it didn't quite cut it. As Celes looked at Shannon, she seemed considerably irritated.

Clara spoke from within Porter.

"Ready here as well. Porter's in optimum condition."

Eva was somewhat excited.

“I’m delighted I can take part at the best stage. We’ll definitely win and make a hero’s song of you.”

May wasn’t here. But I knew she was fighting alongside Marina-san somewhere in Centralle. Vera was outside issuing orders. Monica was holding back the automaton.

Gracia took a stance with her spear that had a buckler attacked at the hilt.

“A single look and I can tell. That one’s trouble. I see, so that’s why you gathered us. I’ll answer your expectations.”

Finally, Ludmilla pulled her longsword, and pointed its red and slender blade at Celes.

“With so many members gathered, we won’t lose. Let’s get this over with and proceed various talks.”

I didn’t want such talks to proceed, but once this was over, I’m sure quite a few things would forcefully go through.

Changing gears, I spoke to everyone.

“Let’s go!”

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... Across the city of Centralle.

The ones destroying buildings as

they fought were May, Marina... and the black quilin Rummel.

The close of Rummel's gargantuan mouth was prevented by Marina, who stepped into her jaw, and crossed both her arms above herself.

"This one's tough as hell!"

Cut up, beaten, minced or burnt black with magic, their foe would instantly regenerate. Perhaps eating whatever dead soldiers around replenished her Mana, but whatever parts she lost were instantly turned back to normal.

May spun circles in the air to build up momentum, launching a sharp kick backed by an absurd amount of

force into Rummel's neck, but...

"How hard."

Feeling a tingling pain in her leg, May parted from the beast. The impact freed Marina from her mouth, and landing while sliding across the ground, she looked at Rummel.

The black quilin's body pounded into the ground forcefully raised its limbs, some bones broken, and some parts blown away.

Looking around, it called soldiers. And those soldiers quickly crept right up to her to be eaten.

Making a crunching sound as she ate, and regenerating, Rummel raised a roar.

“Che, I thought we’d gotten rid of the soldiers in the area.”

Marina clicked her tongue, but the area was already overflowing with soldiers. Defeat the ones in the immediate vicinity, and they’d gather again in no time.

May waved around the leg she’d used to kick, tapping it against the ground.

“She’s even got rare metal implanted into her. She really is a doll.”

Rummel leapt at May, sweeping her large hands in a downwards motion.

May jumped to dodge, and from her head; the horns growing backwards

from just above her ears let off light, hammering magic into Rummel.

An electric discharged assailed her, but it only burned the surface without any evident effects. As a quilin all the same, it seems she did have a resistance to it.

“The place is covered with her feed, what’s more, unlimited stamina... this really is troublesome. Hey, why were you captured by Celes? Cut me some slack here.”

Despite the large mouth Rummel boasted, she would never answer to May’s words...

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... The single automaton Burt took on Monica, alongside Valkyrie Units One, Two and Three.

They ran about from the gatling fire he unleashed from both hands. It was a laser optical weapon, and if it hit, it wouldn't just hurt. It could even melt and pierce through special armor.

As he didn't want to suffer too much damage, Burt remained mindful of the floor above him, and he would rarely attack the pillars supporting it. So Monica and the others used the pillars to conduct their own offensive.

Monica's clothing was tattered.

“Even if we successfully damage him, he recovers with the magic ores in his pockets. After taking so many attacks, he just shrugs it off. He’s the worst, he is.”

Looking at a different pillar, Unit Two had lost an arm. On the opposite side, Unit Three had used her binder as a shield, losing it in the process. They were all ragged.

Nearby, Unit One had portion where the surface of her armor had melted. She spoke to Monica.

“... At this rate, that one’s going to get past us to our master.”

Burt circled around to attack Monica behind the pillars. Before his overwhelming firepower,

Monica made a calculation, and affirmed it truly was a terrible situation.

“That alone I shan’t accept. If this one gets through to the damn chicken, even if he’s cut through, there will definitely be casualties. I definitely can’t permit that.”

If there were sacrifices, Lyle would be saddened.

Monica immediately predicted it, and came out with the optimum option.

“From the start, we were mere constructs. Then there’s only one option.”

As she moved to run from Burt’s circling, Unit One followed behind.

“If he loses you, master will be saddened too.”

“Hmph, that which is Monica shall live on in his heart for the rest of his life, so that’s alright. And making sacrifices of the others is something my aesthetics won’t permit.”

Unit one gave a light laugh.

“Something the matter?”

“No, those are quite some aesthetics. Even if the others are made sacrifices of them, selfish aesthetics that stand as long as those in your immediate surroundings remain safe.”

Approaching from behind, Burt called out.

“You sure have some leisure to chat away like that. I’ll bring you to an end soon enough!”

Breaking another ore, he raised the output of his attack. A hole opened up in a portion of the floor, and Monica and Unit One leaped over the melted portion.

Monica spoke to the Valkyrie.

“Sorry, but you’ll be accompanying me. I alone am not enough to take him down... my apologies.”

There, Unit One shook her head. With the same face as Monica, the twin tails she shared swayed to and fro.

“I mind it not. Rather than spending it in inactivity, it’s a much

better use of life. For the fact that we all have meaning is something you taught us all."

Monica stopped on the spot and turned towards Burt.

"Then off we go!"

Taking out and drinking down the last test tube she had, Monica took out a weapon in both her hands. Burt watched it and laughed. It was a hammer much too primitive. Something like a child's toy with a child's jet engine strapped on.

A glance at it and he was certain of his victory.

"You've made light of me to the end, but when you take your creed so far, there's actually some beauty

to it. Now scatter to pieces."

As he turned the guns in his hands towards Monica and Unit One, the tattered Two and Three leaped before him.

"Self-destruction? As I thought, that land of the perverts is always the same. Then kamikaze it is!"

Pulling the triggers without mercy, piercing Units Two and Three with his beam weapon and melting them. Along with the cores hidden deep in their frames... without their cores they could never be revived as Valkyries.

But Unit Two and Unit Three grabbed onto Burt's arms.

"I would appreciate if you gave it a

rest already. Can you not confirm your own worth without speaking ill of others?"

"Because you want us to care about you, it's nothing but complaints... well, at this point, all our countries are no more."

On Unit Two and Three's words, Burt raised his voice. His expression was tinted with rage.

"You didn't have to say it!!"

Units Two and Three laughed, as they used the magic ore built into their chests... to explode.

Burt was blown backwards, having lost both his arms. While he had lost his guns, he took a magic ore from his inner pocket, and

destroyed it with his mouth to regenerate his hands.

But this time, Monica and Unit One raced at him. Running through the smoke Two and Three had created, they approached.

“If me and Unit One self-destruct, erasing you is easy enough!”

As Monica approached, Burt took out a rifle that exceeded his own height. It seemed to be an optical laser weapon in rifle form.

“Disappear, you shams!”

Burt pulled the trigger, and Monica tried to use that force to raise an explosion. But as she did, Unit one pushed her out of the way with her left hand, and took the laser

weapon herself. Even using her binder as a shield, that single shot held more firepower than the gatling, melting her lower body away.

“What did you…”

Disregarding Monica’s surprise, Burt took out his next magic ore to fire his next shot. It seems each round would expend one of them.

Unit One stuck her hand in her chest, took out her magic ore, and tossed it at Monica.

And turning both her arms towards, Burt, she fired them. Cables stretched from her arms, her hands grasping onto Burt’s.

“What are you…”

Monica caught the magic ore... the peridot; Unit One looked at her and smiled.

“You have to remain. That is what will make our master happiest. And I want you to pass a message... ”

As Unit One began to accelerate towards the butler, Monica crushed the stone. It let off a glimmering light, healing her damage.

Burt had shaken off Unit One’s bindings, and grabbed her by the head.

“You trash!!”

Crushed in his hand core and all, Unit One fell apart. Seeing that, Monica recalled her sister from the Labyrinth... her crumbled sister

from the room Octo had summoned Lyle. The sister who had carried Unit One's core.

At the end, she got the feeling the Valkyrie was smiling.

"... Let the cleaning commence."

Monica's clothes gave off light, dyeing in white, and ceased being maid clothes altogether. Taking on what was almost a wedding dress, white wings manifested from her back. The wings were of metal. Each individual feather was a beam weapon in itself.

Burt shot his rifle at Monica, but it was easily dodged. And achieving a moment of flight with her extended wings, Monica spread out her arms.

“Full cloth... the limited edition wedding-dress mode. Well, to your eyes, it may seem no more than the envoy of your own demise.”

As Burt took out a magic ore, the spread wings shot off light. His rifle and arms were shot through and melted.

“I had no intent to ever show it to you. But if I didn’t pull it out, I couldn’t win. And it was supposed to be one of my trump cards...”

The light shot through him as he regenerated. But Burt...

“So you had magic ore of the highest purity... but even if you used something like that, your limit will come in no time!”

It was just as Burt said. The full cloth upgrades soon disappeared, and she had returned to her normal maid garments. Burt stood and tried to take out a weapon.

But with the drill fastened to her hand, Monica sewed the butler into the wall. His abdomen pierced through by the drill's tip, Burt tried his best to run away.

"D-damn you!"

"True enough, this was a method only possible because my sisters made an opening for it. The time I can keep it up is limited. But it's enough."

As the drill began its rotation, Burt's destruction continued. And

his magic ore continued to deplete in order to regenerate himself.

“S-stop! Stop it!!”

If he was in perfect condition, he would have been able to escape, but as he was, there were no means for him to get away. And he was running low on ore. With everything that had happened, he had used them in large quantities.

Monica spoke expressionlessly.

“I forgot to say it. You boasted of the country that produced you. So I’ll just say it. Every single one of of my parts were produced domestically, but you... not even twenty percent of your parts were made in your homeland, right?

When you're eighty percent foreign-made, you sure talk big."

Burt's face grimaced. He tried to use his arms to stop the spinning drill, but that only shaved his hands away.

Monica continued.

"A majority of your insides are foreign-made. What's more, the important parts are the same ones we use. Meaning, you're moving on the same parts as we who you looked down on, but... are you ashamed of it? It couldn't be you're a high-class masochist who self-depreciates himself as well?"

As the drill's force increased, Burt finally ran out of magic ore and

cried out.

“Celes-sama! Mana... please let some Mana flow to this butler!!”

He thought he would be able to regenerate with Celes’ Mana, but the drill had completely destroyed his abdomen.

In the sparks that flew, his face grew pale.

“Your wealth of expression, and the parts reproducing them are the same ones we use. To be honest, from my point of view... the sham is you who presents yourself as something greater.”

Burt tried to open his mouth, but the drill had finished its work. His head tumbled to the ground, leaving

him to look up at her.

Monica tread over his face.

“The only one allowed to look up my skirt is the damn chicken. Disappear.”

Burt let off a mechanical voice. His mouth no longer moved.

“N-no. I had finally found a master of my own... I don’t want to disappear... here...”

Searching out his core, Monica crushed it without question.

“Don’t cause me so much trouble. Since the chicken dickwad was still sending some Mana over here, he sure is a mindful one. Well, it just goes to show my master was the

splendid one."

During her drill use, Monica had felt some Mana flowing in from Lyle.

The drill let off smoke. Unhanding it, she looked around over the wreckage of her sisters.

Heading for Unit One's wreckage, Monica squatted over it.

"... I'll definitely pass it on. 'I'm thankful we were able to serve humanity. Thank you for giving meaning to our existence'."

Monica closed her eyes, opening them before long to head over to Lyle...

Chapter 328: Lyle's Fighting Style

Within the audience chamber.

In it, the humans who had become monster... the fiends swarmed us.

Looking down on us from nearby the throne, it didn't seem Celes would do anything herself. She didn't really care how many allies she lost. To Celes, what was important wasn't her allies' victory. It was her own victory.

Precisely because she was too strong, she held no interest in others. At this point, even the parents who loved her so were

entities she thought she could just bring back at a moment's notice.

"... Map Model, Real Spec."

Muttering the names of two Skills, I reproduced the audience chamber in three dimensions within my head. And with Real Spec, I got a detailed reading on all enemies around.

"I won't be stingy... Select... Limit Burst, Up 'n Down."

I used one Skill after the next. The Skills the ancestors left for me, I used them on everyone connected to me.

Everyone had a grasp of the surrounding situation, and they received physical enhancements

from the Skills.

“You’re in the way.”

Aria cut forward. Swiping her spear horizontally to send a shockwave, she sent a few fiends flying as she cut them through. In the red armor she wore, her movements were sharp and extremely powerful.

Running ahead, Miranda had the golem to her side follow along. On the golem’s back rode Shannon, and Shannon’s sights were shared with everyone.

The flow of Mana I couldn’t grasp alone was something she supplemented. Because of that, even the positioning of men long dead were properly picked up as

enemies.

“I just have to rip them apart, right?”

Saying that, Miranda made a smile, sending strings from her left hand to apprehend enemies, before going right into tightening them to rip them to shreds.

It was quite a grotesque scene.

“Uwah, how terrible.”

Or so I drew back.

As a fiend opened its large mouth, it fired magic off towards us.

We stepped back, and the one who came forward was Novem. Holding up the Forxuz heirloom staff, she

deployed a Magic Shield to block it completely.

Right after the shield dissipated, three leapt out.

On support was Eva. As she fired an arrow into the temple of a fiend that came towards us, the arrow raised an explosion.

“That’s enough to end them, right?”

As Eva said that, I confirmed it was done for. The ones who leapd out were Ludmilla, Gracia and Elza. Those three... to be blunt, even alone, they were a troublesome force to be reckoned with.

Ludmilla swung her long, red blade to the side.

“I guess I’ll answer your expectations.”

The red blade looked as if it were glowing. And coming at the fiends with sharp movements, it dismembered them. Could it be what she was holding was actually a whip? Or so it let off a shockwave that gave me such a notion.

“Fly away.”

Gracia thrust the spear in her hands towards them, burning them away with pale flames. As fire erupted around, the fiends that leapt at us spread it as they were reduced to cinders.

“Once they’re frozen, everyone’s the same.”

Saying that, Elza gave her staff a strong whack against the floor. As the fiends approached her, their movements suddenly grew duller. There was ice spreading up their feet, and they could no longer stir. The cold gradually enveloped their entirety.

The fiends that tried to force their way through it crumbled from the waist down, leaving them in quite terrible states. Once everything was closed in cold, Elza went around shattering them with her staff, leaving them in small shards.

“How trifling. They’re only a little sturdier than humans.”

While I did find her scary when she said that, her friend Shannon

cheered her on.

“That’s the spirit, Elza!”

Elza gave Shannon a light wave.

I confirmed the fiends had been cleanly taken out without me doing a thing as I looked up at the throne.

“Now what, Celes? You’re the only one here.”

Making a provoking smile, I riled Celes up. With nothing more than a slight twitch of her eyebrow, Celes leisurely took a step forward... right after which, she disappeared.

By the time I noticed it, she was holding the staff-sheath in her left hand, gripping the rapier in her right. She had closed the distance

between us in an instant, trying to pierce my chest through with her rapier. The rapier's blade let off a red light. I'm sure it was some Skill Agrissa had prepared.

But I laughed.

"... Shuffle."

The Seventh's Third Stage Skill. It was the swapping of positions.

Celes tried to pierce me, but I swapped my placement with Ludmilla. She understood my intent, and used her own sword to stop Celes' blow.

When it came to swordplay, I fell short of Celes. And I fell short of Ludmilla. Among us, the one with the greatest skill in swordsmanship

was Ludmilla.

“My turn. Now bear witness to your punishment, sister-in-law.”

Celes opened her eyes a little wider, but she didn’t seem very surprised. She simply...

“Queen of Cartaffs, I believe. Looks like you’ve assembled quite the proficient pieces. But... you’ve sure learned to run your mouth as you hide in a woman’s shadow, trash. Then I’ll start by taking this one out.”

Celes immediately took distance from Ludmilla, letting out attacks with her enhanced rapier. But Ludmilla laughed.

“She’s definitely strong. But... not at

a level where I can't win."

When it came to swordplay alone, Ludmilla didn't lose to Celes. There was also the influence of the Skills raising her abilities a few times over, allowing her to put up a fight.

Celes accelerated and circled around to Ludmilla's back.

"Don't let it get to your head!"

But now with clear aim, Eva fired an arrow. Celes parried it with her rapier, but the arrow exploded, causing her to jump back.

As Ludmilla closed the difference, Celes directed her left hand that held the staff towards her.

I watched that action, and gaining

information from Shannon's eyes, I could anticipate she was about to fire something off.

"Shuffle... Elza, make a wall."

I swapped Ludmilla and Elza's positions, and Elza swung her staff to the side. A large wall of ice manifested, lowering the temperature of the room in an instant.

And on the other side of the ice, I could see fire breaking out.

Elza was a little surprised.

"That's amazing. Her output's close to Gracia's flames."

Meaning her firepower was less than Gracia's. Understanding she

wouldn't be able to melt the wall of ice, Celes forcefully broke it down.

As she cut it to shreds with her rapier, I held up my left hand, and lowered it.

"Everyone attack at once."

With my right hand, I pulled my gun from the holster behind my hip, and fired a shot towards Celes as she leapt towards me.

Novem, Miranda, Gracia and Elza used their magics.

Aria and Ludmilla their shockwaves.

Eva and Clara used arrows and the firearms loaded onto Porter.

All concentrated on one point. We had our aims set with the Skill Select, so we wouldn't be missing. But Celes put up her Magic Shield and blocked it.

While she blocked it, the impact still sent her flying.

Shot back, she slammed into the wall. Sliding down the wall to her landing, and once she was on her feet, she glared towards me.

"... Hiding behind women, and that's quite the grand attitude you have. Could it be you think you can win just because you have so many comrades around you?"

Disregarding the fear I felt at her glare, I put the gun away in its

holster.

“And here we are: winning. It’s not like it’s embarrassing or anything. It’s a fact that I lost to you, but I just couldn’t win one-on-one. More than that, it’s your fault for surrounding yourself with nothing but small fries. Did you think this would come down to one-on-one or something?”

I riled her. I riled Celes. It was for the best.

Celes gripped her weapon and glared at me. A yellow Mana let off a glow to cover her and heighten her abilities.

“Damn trash. Just because you can’t win, don’t think you’ll get off just by

hiding in the background!”

Celes put out a speed even greater than before as she approached me. I parried her blow with the Katana.

Celes made a surprised expression.

“Sorry. I’ve grown some from before. And...”

While Celes had leapt at me, Aria was following her from behind. Poised with her spear, she swung it horizontally, and noticing her approached, Celes used her staff to block the attack. But as her stance crumbled, I kicked her away.

My kick hit right into her stomach, blowing her some distance.

“She’s way too hard. It felt as if I

kicked solid stone there."

Feeling in a pain in my kicking foot, I complained as I looked at Celes in the air. She corrected her posture mid-air, expressionless as she landed. Her eyes moved to rest on Shannon.

"... So it's you."

It looks like Celes noticed. She moved to crush our second eye that was Shannon.

"I don't think so. Shuffle."

The one who I switched out with Shannon to go before Celes was Gracia. She produced flames right in the way of Celes' advance. Giving up on a frontal assault, Celes stopped in her tracks, only for Eva

to fire an arrow there.

Wary of an explosion, Celes jumped out of the way, only for Ludmilla to circle around.

Even if we kept silent, we shared a skillful coordination. That was the power of Connection.

“It’s true my chances fall considerably in one-on-one. But we can all endure your charm, and everyone’s a big shot. It’s not like there’s any need for me to fixate on making it my own victory. That’s the answer I came out with, Celes.”

It’s true Novem was the one who originally started the preparations, but now it was my answer as well. It was idiotic to injure myself trying to

do the impossible.

I'm sure a true hero would take on Celes alone here and grasp victory. But that wasn't my way.

Celes was enraged.

"Your trash. As I thought, I hate you. Even with everything taken from you, you still dare to stand against me. As I thought, I should have just erased you!"

Saying that, Celes plainly headed for our ranged support Eva, so I snapped my fingers.

"Shuffle... Novem."

As I switched Eva and Novem's positions, Novem caught the rapier with her staff.

“I won’t let you, Celes-sama.”

“NOVVEEEEMMM!!”

Celes’ face warped greatly. That I could see hatred, and conflicted emotions whirling around was thanks to Shannon’s eyes.

And Celes’ air changed.

“Each and every one of you is a damn pest!”

What Celes let out were masses of Mana in the shape of beasts. Once they manifested, they started a charge on every one of us

Shannon cried out.

“Those ones explode!”

They were bombs of condensed Mana. Was it a magic Agrissa had produced? I put the Katana away, gripping the Jewel to prepare the bow. When I fired arrows of light, Celes sprung up to the ceiling of the audience chamber.

“As if I’d let you, fool!”

Saying that, she swung her rapier, raining beads of flames to destroy the arrows, preventing the destruction of the beasts.

“Kuh! Everyone intercept individually!”

Everyone tried to destroy the beasts, but they dodged attacks and magics as they approached their targets. A few of them exploded, showing

quite a considerable output.

And Miranda cried out.

“Shannon!”

“... Eh?”

A monster of Mana who leapt through the blast tried to take Shannon with its fangs. I hurriedly reached out my hand, but the distance was considerable.

I tried to use Shuffle, but there was a monster coming towards me as well, and I was firing arrows with my bow. Celes remained plastered to the ceiling as she raised a laugh.

“Ahahaha... see that, that’s the first one down!”

As Miranda cried out, the magic beast's sharp fangs pierced deeply into Shannon.

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... The city of Centralle.

Ragged as she became, Marina slammed her fist into Rummel again and again. Her fists were covered in blood, and her metal gauntlets had been destroyed.

"Drop... dead already, dammit!!"

Even taking Marina's blows powerful enough to rock the surrounding air, Rummel instantly

regenerated, swiping her large hand to the side to brush Marina away.

Marina broke through the wall of a building, even barreling inside. Rummel regenerated the parts beaten and crushed, and where the flesh had been blown away.

“Gfu, gufufufu.”

With the continued regenerations, there were subtle changes branching from her initial form. For each place that swelled strangely, there were places where thorns protruded out.

Within all of that, with her forehead cut, and one eye unable to open from the blood, May stood before Rummel.

She was out of breath as the quilin faced one another.

Around them, there were fewer buildings left standing. May's right arm let off a faint light.

"I had Marina buy some time, but I finally have the preparations in order. Good grief, you're way too tough. Because of that, you've forced me to use my trump card."

Saying that, May made a fist.

Both of Rummel's much-too-large eyes focused on May's fist.

"You curious? Wanna know? I see... then I'll teach you!"

As she tread into the ground, the ground was gouged out below her.

Both Rummel and May leapt forward to meet, the black quilin opening her large mouth to swallow May down. As there were fewer dead soldiers around, she was trying to eat May to recover.

But that was most favorable.

“So there was some worth in going around and crushing soldiers. Good grief, and I hate pain here.”

As she thought that, May stuck her right arm into Rummel’s mouth. As she grabbed onto the black quilin’s ominous tongue, her mouth closed with good momentum.

May’s right arm had been severed at the elbow.

Holding her shoulder, May endured

the pain.

“... Now die from the inside.”

She put up a false front as she laughed. As she jumped back, Rummel who couldn’t understand a word she said swallowed the arm down. She swallowed it whole.

And May held onto her open wound with her left hand.

“If only you were just a little smarter. But perhaps you’re only so strong because you don’t have the head to think.”

Right after, Rummel’s upper body was blown apart. Blood spouted out, and the chunks of flesh splattered across the remaining buildings.

Both May's and Rummels bodies were dyed red in blood, but May instantly produced some water with magic to wash herself off.

And slowly hobbling out of a building, Marina breathed heavily with her mouth as she pummeled Rummel's remaining lower body into the ground.

Both women were panting heavily.

As they sat down on the spot, May looked in the direction of the palace. She could still hear the sound of guns and cannons, and she had felt the tremors a number of times.

Seeing a portion of the palace blown away, May muttered.

"... Shannon."

Opening her eyes wide, May unsteadily stood. She slowly walked forward towards the royal palace.

Marina hurriedly stood and grasped May's shoulders.

"Idiot, you've got to seal that wound at once. It's dangerous if you just leave it because you're a quilin!"

May stared at Marina's face absentmindedly.

"You're right. But I have to go..."

Since May was going to go even so, Marina offered her a shoulder, and for now, chose to set out for a place she knew they'd find allies...

Chapter 329: Laughing Celes

“Shannon!”

Miranda’s bitter cry that echoed through the chamber was directed at the beastly mass of Mana... the beast of Mana without a rear half sticking its fangs into Shannon before exploding.

In that audience chamber shrouded in smoke and dust, my vision only grew poorer. On the ceiling, as if she had inverted the law of gravity, Celes stood upside-down.

Her hair did hang, but it didn’t look like she was actually fastened to the

ceiling.

“Kyahahaha! Lookie, see that!? That’s the first one down. If you don’t hurry up, they’re going to keep dropping like flies.”

As Celes swung her rapier and staff, that yellow glowing magic fired off beasts once more. That magic racing at us as if it was running with its forelimbs gave pursuit as it even evaded our attacks.

I lent a glance to where Shannon was.

I confirmed Miranda crumbling. With her helmet and hair, I couldn’t see her eyes, but I could see her mouth, and I was satisfied.

Looking up at Celes, I took a stance

with the bow, and produced some arrows of light.

When I had made the same number as the number of Celes' magic beasts, I fired them.

"As I was saying, that isn't going to work."

As Celes swung her rapier, Gracia and Elza fired magic towards the ceiling. Running across the ceiling Celes evaded their magic with light feet. Perhaps to crush my arrows of light, she continued raining flares down.

However...

"... Shannon, you can see them, right? Guide me."

As I called Shannon's name, she popped up behind Miranda. Once the smoke had cleard, Miranda stopped her act, and threw her dagger.

The dagger she threw, the arrows I fired....

"... I'm a bit disgusted you know. Knowing I'm right beside you, you scream out and cry so loudly, it really is disgusting acting, you know."

"Shannon, you're being mean to your sister. I'll remember this."

Seeing Miranda's smile, Shannon let an, 'Eek!' leak from her throat.

While she was put off by Miranda's acting, Shannon still served as a

guide.

“Warp.”

They each rammed into Celes’ magics. The beasts exploded. Seeing Celes’ eyes open wide, I purposely laughed. And it was a laugh to rile.

Otherwise... the Third’s Skill wouldn’t work. The Third’s Skill that took advantage of the gaps in one’s heart worked best when an opponent was in a dirorderly state of mind.

Meaning I was riling her all for that.

“What’s wrong? You think you accomplished something? Did you really believe it?”

We purposely arranged it like that, but putting it this way was more effective on Celes. She grew quite enraged when I belittled her.

And there was meaning in bringing Shannon here.

“You trash!!”

Turning to Celes as an intense furrow graced her brow, Shannon cried out.

“She’s changed out! She’s firing a different magic. Big enough to blow us away!”

What Shannon wanted to say was that Celes had swapped out her Skill. And she was going to carry out an attack by magic. What’s more, with enough force to blow

the audience chamber away... as we were connected with Connection, explaining it to everyone was unnecessary.

As Celes' body let off a yellow light, we gathered in one spot. Circling around behind Porter as Porter took on a defensive stance.

Clara spoke indifferently.

"This porter... already has anti-magic procedures done to it. On top of that, it has magic ore furnished in its chest, so..."

We who hid behind Porter as it crossed its large arms deployed our own magic shields as well.

"You're noisy!!"

Overwritten by Celes' words, Clara's explanation was cut off part-way. But once a large magic shield was deployed in front of Porter, it successfully blocked the magic that was supposed to blow everything away.

When I thought it was an attack that would really blow it all away, it turned out to be a rain of countless small attacks on everything around.

As the audience chamber itself also had anti-magic procedures installed, not everything was destroyed, but it sure was left in a terrible state.

While the walls and pillars were ridden with holes, we were safe.

Ludmilla went out in front of Porter, holding her own sword against her shoulder.

“That was powerful. But you couldn’t forcefully blow us away? No, you aren’t capable of...”

Seeing Celes twitch in reaction, Shannon cried out.

“She can’t! Celes can’t blow this castle away! Her Mana shook more at the former, so there’s no doubt about it!”

I heard something interesting. There was some sort of reason that prevented Celes from destroying the royal palace. Though I didn’t know what it was.

There, Novem opened her mouth.

“It’s because a portion of the corpses are preserved here. If Maizel-sama, and Claiir-sama’s remains are obliterated, she won’t be able to reproduce them again. That’s what she fears.”

As Novem said that, Celes grimaced.

I fanned it a little more.

“Good work you two. Meaning she doesn’t want to do a flashy fight that could blow the palace away. To add onto that, that’s the reason she met up with us here.”

She had let off magic that could even blow the magic-resistant audience-chamber away. If she ran wild outside of it, she feared her

parent's remains would be damaged.

I looked at Celes.

"You sure are kind on our parents. That's a surprise. I felt you didn't feel a thing about family."

When I put my question to mouth, her face warped even further.

"Silence! A failed piece of trash like you... someone who inherited more than their share of power and memory would never...!"

Hearing that, I laughed.

"Well not that I care. Shannon just needed some time to strip you bare. It does seem Agrissa's in that Jewel. From here on, we'll be getting

serious."

As I said that, everyone readied their weapons.

Celes dismounted the ceiling and landed on the floor. Her speed would likely make her invisible to the average eye. Right, average. And there was barely an average person here.

"Trash shouldn't run their mo..."

I riled Celes.

"I'm tired of hearing your words. You're going to die for my sake. I'm going to use your death to the fullest."

Celes snapped in an instant and rushed at me. But without taking

any stance, I waited for her... Celes' rapier pierced into my chest.

And as it pierced in, my illusion disappeared.

With her force, Celes ran straight into a wall. I called out to her from behind.

"Very well. The Third Generation's Skill was mind manipulation. It can only show illusions, but... looks like you're nothing special yourself."

Watching Celes' expressionless face, I couldn't say I really just barely managed to activate it.

My surface expression was composed, but it really was considerably close. Yet my inner thoughts were relayed to everyone

by Skill.

Shannon averted her eyes from me.

“... Yeah, there was no helping it. I mean for me, clinging to this golem is the most I can do.”

Shannon tried to cheer me up. It went straight to my heart.

Riling her and getting her in our trap. A fighting style based on the premise of Celes’ weak psych. Of course, up to this point, she had only ever fought as the top dog.

That she would be weak in this sort of setting was something the Third told me.

“From here on, we’ll be serious. We’ll crush you seriously... Full

Drive."

As I activated the Fourth's Third Stage Skill, I felt the surrounding movements grow slower. In such a situation, we headed for Celes in a different manner than before.

Ludmilla from the front, Gracia and Elza on both flanks.

Jumping to the ceiling, Eva pulled her bow, and set her sights on Celes.

There, from Celes' body, I could see a half-transparent yellow arm.

I'm sure that was information coming from Shannon's demon eyes.

"I've seen this before! It was

sometime recent, so there's no doubt about it!"

As Shannon said it, I recalled. The Skill my senior disciple in the sword, Alfred, had used. A Skill to put out invisible hands from one's body.

Miranda threw a dagger with a wire attached.

"She has quite a variety of Skills. But she can't use them simultaneously, right?"

The dagger she controlled started cutting through those invisible hands. Through Shannon's eyes, she could understand where she'd have to attack to dissipate them.

Two in one... it was as if I could see

the vestiges of Milleia-san. No, perhaps they had already surpassed that.

Deflecting Ludmilla's shockwave, and parrying Gracia's charge with her staff, Celes kicked Elza. But she was late to respond to Eva's arrow, so it grazed her face.

Once she had blown the three away, this time she swung her fist to take Porter on the side. In order to avoid that, Novem fired magic.

She was somewhat holding back. Novem's sentiment was flowing through to me. Celes carried the blood of the Walt House, so she was hesitant to give it her all.

There, Miranda and Aria leapt out.

Miranda managed to capture Celes' left arm with her wires. But Celes brute forced it, and swung Miranda around into a wall.

I went in to catch Miranda, meanwhile Aria's blow was parried by Celes's rapier... or so it wasn't.

The red gem let off light. Aria's strike was one with her spear enhanced and its output risen, on top of a greatly increased speed, that single blow had given way to an absurd amount of force.

"With this...!!"

"You brute bitch!!"

Celes was shot back. Aria's full force had broken and shattered the blade of Celes' rapier.

Standing to her feet and beginning her move, Celes seemed considerably fast even with our own acceleration. However.

“She’s preparing magic! P-probably fire!”

“Don’t say probably!”

I heard Shannon’s voice and prepared a wall of ice. There, Celes’ magic collided, and vaporized my wall in an instant.

It seems I can’t do it like Elza. But that was plenty. For I had shut down her magic.

Ludmilla approached Celes, and having lost her rapier, Celes tried to block with her staff, making her late to respond to Gracia and Elza’s

attacks from above.

I recalled how she had always been dull to attacks from right above her.

“She hasn’t improved on that? Shannon!”

I asked Shannon.

“It seems like it’s a Skill with a blind spot right above... but I think it’s only because it’s those two that they were able to take her by surprise.”

By the attacks of the two, her clothing was tattered as she forcefully parted from the spot and came towards me.

I instantly prepared an illusion, only for Celes to start attacking that

illusion. The form of her lowering her staff onto the empty ground was quite a spectacle.

And to Celes as she stood surprised near the wall...

“I’ve kept you waiting!!”

The one who entered by breaking down the wall with her large hammer was Monica. From the wall, the Valkyries began streaming in.

I turned towards Novem.

She still seemed hesitant. No, to Novem who worshiped the Walt House blood, taking Celes on was difficult.

Everyone came down on Celes as

she was blown off by the hammer's force. As her leisure gradually disappeared, she only grew more tattered before the group.

But her blue eyes let off a glint.

"It's coming again!"

On Shannon's cry, the Valkyries deployed their wing-like binders in front. We hid behind them.

And I raced out.

As I raced towards the weakened Celes, I pulled my Katana to cut at her. She tried to use her chipped staff to block it.

"Looks like our roles have been reversed."

“...! You damn bastard!!”

Interestingly enough, while she had changed to a defensive battle, if you riled her, she would undo her defenses. She forcefully avoided the first slash. Even in a situation like this, that her body reacted on its own was quite amazing.

But I changed my grip, and sent my second slash towards her.

“You haven’t grown at all! Such a transparent attack won’t...”

But by the time I had changed my grip, my left hand was gripping my gun. As I pulled the trigger, I aimed at Celes’ temple, but perhaps she had forcefully turned her body, as the bullet embedded into her right

shoulder.

And I...

“Shannon!”

Shannon shot her gun straight up. Celes immediately ignored it and came at me. Expressionlessly, her eyes with nothing more than the intent to kill reflected my face back at me...

As Celes leaned forward, the ricocheted bullet pierced her chest.

“You should at least wear some armor. Perhaps that would have blocked it.”

Celes’ eyes were surprised. Surprised, and even pierced in the chest, she hit her staff against the

ground and didn't fall to her knees.

"Get away from her!"

I thought to deal the final blow, but as flames manifested around me, Novem grabbed me and pulled my back. Within that tempest of flames, Celes tottered as she stood on her own two feet and touched her chest.

The breast of her white dress was dyed red.

I had given the gun Shannon held as a memento of Milleia-san over to old Letarta, and told him to make a magic tool of it. While it could only fire a shot, its output was definitely there.

Celes watched the blood flow from

her chest.

“Kuhi... kuhihihi!!”

Her mouth curved into a crescent moon, and with a stream of blood flowing from her mouth, she laughed. Even when they were flames produced through magic, Elza wasn’t able to erase them.

“What’s with these flames... this is simply too strange.”

Even if she sent ice at it, it would vaporize in an instant. And yet the flame’s momentum wouldn’t stop. Gracia as well.

“They were my pride, but... these do overshadow my fire.”

Before the flames surrounding

Celes, Gracia broke into a cold sweat.

Novem spoke.

“You cannot approach. This flame... won’t go out so easily.”

I instantly changed my grip on my gun, and loaded a bullet to attack, but Celes only looked at me and laughed.

“This really is the worst; you all... getting in the way of my fun times...”

Seeing her so energetic with her chest pierced through, I muttered.

“Damn monster.”

There, Celes smiled and pointed at

me.

“Fool. The true monster here is you, shithead. I sealed away a damn monster like you.”

Without lending an ear to her words, I took a stance with my gun and fired. But the bullet wouldn’t hit her.

Novem looked at me and shook her head.

“This one’s specially made. Special-made flames... well, for suicidal purposes. Truth be told, I wanted to blow the whole area away, but someone got in the way.”

In the way. Hearing that, I had a rough idea.

“Agrissa!”

I heard a voice that didn’t seem to come from anywhere. From the hilt of her broken rapier, Celes extracted the Yellow Jewel.

『Celes, it does seem the promised time has come!』

Delighted. The merry laughing voice of a woman. A charming voice. There, Celes sounded reluctant.

“I know, I know. I did make a promise.”

I reached out a hand. But if I said it, it would just make her more dead-set. That on my mind, I turned to Novem beside me.

“Celes-sama, you cannot let yourselve be deceived by Agrissa. What Agrissa wants is your body...”

“I know. What of it?”

Celes disinterestedly spoke to Novem.

“I followed that one’s orders knowing full well. And she gave me power for it. If I could beat the trash I hated with all my being, then I didn’t really care about my life or anything like that. I hate him. Makes me want to vomit. When I look at trash like you.”

Celes’ hate was the real thing. Irrelevant to Agrissa, Celes hate me from the depths of her heart.

“I hate everything. Humans are

equally without worth. All besides my parents are unnecessary existences lower than trash. They had multiplied so much, I thought I'd have some fun crushing them with Agrissa. If it's for something like that, my life is but a cheap trinket, is it not?"

When I thought it was the end, Celes began spewing out all her dissatisfactions.

"I haven't played around enough at all! I wanted to torture more people and see them suffer! I wanted to play by killing their loved ones before their eyes, and forcing those who hated me into submission! There are still loads of fun ways to kill I haven't gotten around to trying! ... But it's fine. Because it's a

promise."

"Promise? Weren't you being tricked..."

As I said that, Celes burst into laughter. Watching her spitting blood from her mouth as she laughed in the flames, I felt as if I was seeing a laughing apparition of hell.

"The price for so much fun was my body! That wasn't all I got from it. By doing it, I could surpass you. Steal, seal, and put you through pain. It was the best time of my life. While there are things I've left undone, I haven't regretted a second of it. More than that, why is there any need for me to be tormented and beaten by any of

you? When I'm feeling so refreshed over here!"

Celes began to dance.

I'd never seen a human so elated over her death to come. No, was she even human?

『You've made a misunderstanding. I definitely did call out to Celes. Just as I did to all my descendants in my many generations of imprisonment. But even I'm soft on my family. I didn't have the mind to force her into anything.』

Agrissa's words echoed through the chamber. I gave orders for everyone to stand down.

『I proposed my desired conditions to Celes. In the case that you lose,

your body will die, so hand it over to me, I said. And when she did, my adorable Celes...』

“A price of that level wasn’t even worth considering for me. More than that, I was suspicious over whether that was really enough. Perhaps she was tricking me, I thought.”

『It was quite a trial to correct that misunderstanding. I never thought she’d think so little of that life. Even I was surprised by that one. That’s precisely why my Celes is adorable. The time I spent with you was a blast, Celes.』

“Yes, I had my fun too. My only regret is that I could have played more. But perhaps it’s fine like this.

If I found satisfaction, I'd grow tired of it all. Perhaps it's best it ends while I still think it's fun."

『You really are cute, Celes.』

The two laughing voices resounded.

I never thought she'd be able to live with her heart pierced. As I thought I'd made a blunder, Agrissa laughed aloud.

『Dear Lyle, your face speaks that you're blaming yourself. But you've no such need. Even if... Celes was to become mincemeat or ash, or was obliterated entirely, I would have fulfilled our promise. What you should have planned for was how to destroy me. Of course, you won't be able to destroy this Jewel by any

half-baked means.♫

Celes continued her dance.

“From here on, Agrissa will revive, and make hell of this world. While it’s sad I won’t get to see it, that’s not a problem. I mean, she’ll do something even more interesting than me!”

Celes’ warped smile showed true delight.

“What’s with this one...”

Aria took a stance with her spear, but she took a step back from fear. Eva stood ready with her bow but her hands were shaking. The others were the same.

They couldn’t keep up with the

situation. No, it was worse than they had expected. Celes hadn't the slightest resistance to her body being taken over

Celes laughed.

"All your desperation ever did was call forth an existence even greater than me. It truly is a sorry sight. Not that I care. I concede my loss. I'm sure you'll be coming over to this side in no time, so when you do, we'll play some more. See you all in hell."

Celes smiled as she swallowed the Jewel whole.

Chapter 330: A Goddess Revived

... Celes swallowed the Jewel whole.

She had expected some resistance as it passed through her throat, but without such a thing- as if melting its way through- it settled comfortably in her stomach. She had looked up to swallow it down, but now she slowly returned her gaze to Lyle's party.

The flames of high-density Mana whirled around to protect her. It was a Skill that had been made for suicide, and those flames had stored Mana from Celes- a being with enough Mana one couldn't think

her human- over the course of many long years.

There's no way Lyle's party would be able to lay hands on it.

For an output large enough to blow the imperial capital away was now being used to protect her body.

It was a Skill Agrissa had granted to Celes, and from the start, they were flames prepared to illuminate any hindrances.

『Celes, are you ready?』

Agrissa's voice was kind. Celes nodded.

"Yeah, I'm ready. It was a promise, after all."

Celes recalled. The events of that day.

It was back when Celes was six. Carrying on the memories of Septem, she strongly inherited the recollections of her oppression under humanity, just as Agrissa before her. Having been born carrying those memories from birth, she couldn't help but think of all those besides her parents as trash.

They were all nothing more than noisy insects she could vanish with a touch, and that's all she could see them as. To Celes, whether she liked them or not was all that determined a bug's worth. That's what she had thought.

But...

(That thing alone I won't forgive. I definitely won't forgive him.)

Her brother Lyle had somehow managed to succeed all the memories of Septem. And even as he carried them on, he definitely held an existence he could call his own self.

Saying he wouldn't look back on the past, he even found out how to seal some of the memories of his own accord.

He was talented. He had surpassed Celes.

And just like the Septems of Celes' memory who had always been pushed down and trampled... Lyle

was kind to those around. He answered to his parent's expectations, and was loved by all.

Even if he didn't rely on Septem's power, Lyle was loved.

Just like a shadow to the sun, the stronger Lyle shone, the darker grew her darkness.

And usually hiding behind a cheerful façade, Celes would detest him. What only served to strengthen her hatred was that Lyle had noticed it... and even so he was kind to her.

Beyond the tempest of flames, she could see the others looking her way, frustrated they were unable to raise a hand.

When she saw Lyle without his smile of old, Celes' feelings cleared up.

Under Lyle's continued kindness, while her sense of overwhelming inferiority tormented her, the moment the Jewel she found after her grandmother's death whispered to her, she felt her fate was calling.

She had entered her grandmother's room, looking around to see if she could find anything interesting. She found it disgusting to see everyone around grieve so. To Celes, that's all her grandmother was to her.

Of all else, faint as it was, her grandparents had noticed Celes' abnormal nature as well.

It was boring. She had even slipped out of the funeral services. But on the day she entered that room, she found quite a special little box.

As she opened it...

『Hmm, you're not Zenoire. Her grandchild Celes? You've sure grown a bit.』

The moment she found the Yellow Jewel was the moment she met Agrissa. And from there, everything had begun to move.

What Agrissa desired was Celes' body. And it's not as if she had a particularly strong desire for it. To Agrissa, Celes was a cute descendant. An existence with value to Agrissa as well.

On the other side of the flames, the existences who tormented her so were in a panic.

Celes spread out her arms.

“... Now taste despair. I’ll be watching it all from hell.”

Even though she was fading away, Celes laughed to the end...

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After Celes’ final laugh, she spread her arms. Her body swelled up, spat up blood and burst.

I thoughts the bits of flesh would

scatter about, but absorbing in the surrounding flames, the meat and blood gathered to form a sphere. As the dark red sphere pulsed, I held out my gun and fired.

Everyone immediately attacked with their magic, arrows and cannons, but...

The dark red mass burst open, and from it came the form of an unclothed woman wet with blood.

Her long, golden hair was soaked in blood, but even so it shimmered. The violet eyes I could see from the gaps in her hair sparkled like precious gemstones.

Pale sking, and a beautiful body. Her large chest and narrow waist...

there, I shook my head. As everyone was taken in, I called out.

“Get a grip on yourselves!”

There, the blood-soaked woman... perhaps in her mid to late twenties? The woman of around that age looked at me and raised the corners of her mouth.

The woman who had been beside the throne, in the brief moment I turned to call to my party, had found her way to my side.

“At least allow me some reverence. And I should say, pleasure to meet you, Lyle.”

She hadn’t the slightest presence. Even when I was sharing Shannon’s sense of sight, I couldn’t sense her.

While I leapt backwards, the woman didn't give chase..

She looked over at me with a gentle smile.

"Don't be so scared. I hold some affection for you. It really has been a while since I last felt like this. Let's see... I'm just about as excited as when your ancestors landed the final blow on me."

From the flow of the conversation, this was the one my ancestor finished off... Agrissa.

"Miranda!"

Miranda, who'd recovered faster than any of the others, wound Agrissa in her threads. While her naked form was bound, even

Miranda's threads were unable to damage her skin.

"How hard can she be!?"

There, Agrissa laughed. She laughed as she cut the threads.

"You say some terrible things. Even like this, I have soft skin here. Want to test it out? As expected of the ones Novem chose. The place is full of cuties."

Unlike Celes, she continued on with an affectionate attitude. But that was contrarily terrifying. If she had been serious there, perhaps she would have been able to kill me. And yet she didn't.

She couldn't, or such wishful thinking was a taboo.

Novem came out in front of me. While she held up her staff, that staff had taken the form of a scythe as she put up her highest level of vigilance.

“Agrissa... no, Septem!”

There, Agrissa’s expression clouded.

“Don’t call me that. I am Agrissa. I’d like you don’t call me a fool’s name like Septem. Well, I’m sure Septem isn’t the only fool out there, though.”

In the later half, she took an attitude to provoke Novem. There, Novem approached her with a speed she hadn’t displayed before, swinging her staff with her aim on the woman’s neck.

And Agrissa grabbed it with her left hand to stop it.

“Hey, hey, don’t be so angry. I’ve finally revived over here. Even so, it’s been a while since I took in this scent of Mana activating. The stench of the battlefield. I’m sure they’re fighting outside as well. How nice... when I think that humans will die, it’s simply exhilarating. As I thought, there are some things you can only sense with a body of your own.”

I felt some fear as Agrssa’s face flushed, as I issued orders around.

My comrades linked with Connection started to act. Ludmilla and Gracia attacked to pincer her.

They were strengthened with Skills. Both their speed and output were well above the norm, but...

“Oh, the descendants of goddesses? With a better look, it seems you’ve gathered others as well. Lyle, you’re amazing. Did you gather them unaware of it all, or could this be fate... well, that doesn’t matter.”

The blood scattered around swelled up, and forming a large arm, it blocked Ludmilla and Gracia’s attack.

“Damn this thing!”

As Gracia let out flames, Agrissa looked at her.

“Oh, how hot, very hot indeed. Looks like you’re not part goddess

for nothing. But that's all it is. I'll add you to my collection, so pipe down for now."

Sending them flying, Agrissa erased the arm protecting her. As she stretched out, it was Monica's and Elza's turn to attack.

Clara went off to collect those blown away, while Miranda shook as she clung onto Shannon.

"Automaton. You've brought back quite a nostalgic thing. Well, I'm sure it hates me."

Agrissa looked over Monica with intrigue. Monica lowered her giant hammer.

"You're even more dangerous than that damn vixen, my core is telling

me. Dissapear!”

Stopping that hammer strike with the palm of her hand, Agrissa used her other hand to grip the staff Elza swung. While she had coated it in a blade of ice, when it touched Agrissa, the ice easily shattered.

Agrissa looked disappointed.

“It’s a shame. You guys were the best. And you’re valuable things the humans left behind. I’d like to keep you by my side, but... well, if Lyle becomes mine, I’m sure you’ll consent.”

As Agrissa looked at me, she sent Monica and Elza flying. Aria came out before me, but Agrissa slipped past her and came out to my front.

“Wha...”

As she touched a hand to my cheek, she looked at my face.

“Splendid. Since you carry my blood, I can feel true affection to you. What’s more, despite our blood connection being a thing of the distant past, you are strong. Even with everything stolen away by Celes, you’ve filled your vessel with a different power to take its place. It seems Celes hated you, but... I’ve taken a liking to you.”

Could it be she was a surprisingly better person than the legends spoke of? I had gotten around to thinking that. As I shook my head to part from that delusion, Novem lowered her staff at Agrissa.

There, Agrissa let out a sigh.

“Hah... Novem, don’t get in the way.”

Novem’s face was dyed in more rage than I have ever seen before.

“When you’ve killed Celes-sama, you’re...!!”

As the staff of scythe form caught ablaze, Agrissa hurled her away. But Novem cut at her.

Her movements were even faster than the last time. As if... Novem was gradually beginning to change.

“It’s something Celes wished for. In the first place, you made good use of what we were trying to do, did you not? You didn’t want my blood

to get into Lyle, so you used Celes to rid him of it."

"Shut up!!"

Novem's violet eyes looked as if they were glowing. Mana welled up from her, and her power...I saw it as the same sort of thing as Agrissa's.

"So you'll exceed humankind. Interesting. My base this time's a more talented one, don't think I'm the same as before."

I could tell Agrissa's provocations were enraging Novem. From the line that joined us, so much of Novem's emotions flowed in I couldn't even process it.

"...!"

I held my chest.

Novem had forcefully severed our line. And Shannon cried out.

“Stop Novem! Agrissa... Agrissa’s aim is Novem!”

We approached Novem and Agrissa at once, but while Agrissa looked a little disappointed for a moment, she instantly changed it to a smile.

“How unfortunate. I thought I’d be able to find love in your figures of despair as well, but you have a perceptive child among you. Though you’re too late.”

Novem spouted Mana, her storm of magic sweeping the audience chamber in its midst. Looked at from aside, perhaps it would merely

look like a wind was blowing over the room. But in our eyes, we could perceive the flow of Mana Shannon saw as well.

I looked at Novem.

“Novem is... changing.”

It looked as if she was changing into something inhuman. While she remained her human form, the same something as the Agrissa she raged at and despised so... around Agrissa, two giant hands of dark red amassed.

“Septem!!”

In her rage, Novem could only see Agrissa.

“So you’ve gone into a rage at my

ending of Celes!? It looked as if you put on airs when in Lyle's presence, but as I thought, this is how you've got to be! The same as that time! The time that you killed me! You haven't changed a bit!"

Seeing Novem's anger, Agrissa laughed. We were blown away by the wind, and collided with the walls. The Valkyries received us, while the large hands enveloped Agrissa and Novem in their palms.

Those swallowed two... and forming a deep red sphere once more, Agrissa showed her form from within.

"What's this. The hell is all this..."

Agrissa before my eyes had grown

larger. Her womanly form showed no change, but speaking to height, she exceeded four meters. And at her chest was Novem, her head lowered languidly.

At her arms and legs rose vessels of blood, changing them to limbs of hardened deep red part-way through. On her back, what I couldn't call wings, a number of horn-like somethings stuck out.

"... I can't get used to this. It'll take some more time, but... as expected of Novem. So she had her memory handed down in its entirety. With this, I can cleanly fill in whatever parts I was lacking."

The enlarged Agrissa looked down over us. And her expression turned

to a smile.

“What’s wrong Lyle? Why do you look at me so?”

I pulled my Katana and took a stance.

“What did you do to Novem!?”

“Don’t be so angry. I merely took her in. I’ll have her become my flesh and blood. Though there’s no salvation for her even if she suffers such a fate. You want to hear? Of what Novem did? You want to know? Of what the existences called goddesses really were?”

I looked at Agrissa’s chest. My Skills told me Novem was still alright. But I couldn’t think she’d be safe forever like that.

Aria looked up at Agrissa.

“Goddess? This thing is...?”

There, Agrissa glared at her.

“Yeah, that’s right. This wretched form is what man once revered as a goddess. It was humans who worshiped we made by man! And so we became their god. So... the slaughter here to come is the retribution god decided.”

Agrissa leisurely raised her arms, and in lieu of Shannon, Miranda cried out. She directed her voice to everyone connected on the line.

“Have everyone evacuate! At least make them take refuge!”

From the flow of the Mana wafting

around, and the result of Shannon's reading, I was shocked.

"Everyone, evacuate at..."

Everyone didn't just mean the people right here. She meant our entire army that had invaded Centralle.

But Agrissa Laughed.

"I'm going to go easy on you. But it's far too late for that."

The light fired from the hands she raised ahead tried to blow everything away. Its output held all of Centralle in its effective range.

Porter immediately moved to cover us, but determining that was insufficient, the Valkyries leapt up

front and all deployed their binders.

At the moment all was enveloped in light, all I could hear was Agrissa's voice.

"I'll dye this continent in blood, and this time it'll be my turn to take the rule. Novem, I'll give you a box seat to watch the spectacle! Now watch from there as your beloved humans fall to ruin!"

I gripped the Jewel.

Chapter 331: The Seventh

... Fighting outside the royal palace, Vera looked on in surprise as the dead soldiers who'd broken through the window stopped moving.

Gripping gun in her hand, she looked around to see just what could have happened.

Her sweaty skin had several tufts of her black hair stuck to it. Getting her breathing in order, she sent a glance around to her sailors who held their guns in a similar manner.

"What does this mean? Could it be Lyle went and did it?"

Before the dead men that showed not a twitch beyond the window, she saw her troubled comrades. But a single Valkyrie barged into the room.

“Everyone prepare to evacuate. No, you will not make it in time, get out of there at once.”

Vera tucked her gun away.

“What happened?”

The Valkyrie looked up at the palace.

“Everything was going according to plans, but things have gone somewhat awry. Master and the others are dealing with it, but we shall retreat.”

“What about Lyle and everyone else!?”

The Valkyrie left a moment of silence.

“They are alive. But this is an order. Perhaps keeping close will only be a hindrance.”

Unable to provide a certain answer to Vera’s query, the Valkyrie continued to evacuate everyone...

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... A number of the large-scale Porters packed with people had already departed.

Damien had boarded one of them, and from the ceiling he could see the palace. To Damien's side, old Letarta was there as well.

And the golems Damien manipulated followed along beside the porter. Over the creaking and shaking loading tray of that oversized Porter, Damien looked at the palace.

"I've got a bad feeling. It's much too quiet."

Letarta supported the bad feeling Damien spoke of. It seems he felt something as well.

"After those dead men suddenly stopped moving, we're told to evacuate. This means something

terrible's going to happen, right?"

Baldoir climbed up from the loading tray.

"Evacuate and leave Lyle-sama behind, you say!?"

Clinging onto his hips was Alette. Alette was grabbing him and making sure he didn't get away.

"Wait! I'm sure he'll be just fine!"

"Abandoning my lord under such speculation..."

There, the three automatons near Damien noticed an aberration. Seeing the light coming from the palace, they stood in front of Damien, and readied their shields.

Damien lowered his hips.

“Something’s coming.”

Right after... when a white light blew the ceiling off the palace, that light expanded to cover the royal capital... the entirety of Centralle.

The moving fortress that had attacked the palace was blown away as well, and thrown into the air, it was right up swallowed by the light.

“This is...”

As old Letarta looked at the light, Damien’s Automaton Unit One opened her mouth.

“We’re crossing the ramparts.”

As the large-scale Porter leapt over

the wreckage of the ramparts, as if to claim everything within the city walls, the white light shone through to the ramparts before they suddenly cut off.

Damien's giant automatons protected them from the rubble raining down.

From the shockwave, the large-scale porter rose in the air a bit.

Once the light had subsided, a dust cloud assailed them. A strong wind of sand and dust.

As it all died down, they gradually secured their lines of sight. And the scene that expanded before them was what had been completely reduced to a mountain of rubble:

the city of Centralle. The walls were lost, and only a portion of the royal palace just barely remained.

Damien looked at the something floating about the palace...

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When I thought I had been swallowed up by the light, the shock died down, and I could look ahead.

Before my eyes, the Valkyries should have been there expanding their binders to contain the blast... but all that remained were their ankles, and a pink, knit thread

swept away by the wind. A portion of it was burned, but Monica standing before my eyes took it in her hand, and carefully tucked it away in her apron.

As I looked around, the view grew clearer. The ceiling was blown off, the walls long-gone... the city of Centralle had been cleanly erased, leaving behind a space of scattered rubble.

And the cloudy sky had been opened up just above the royal palace alone; within the light that streamed through, floating in the air was Septem... Agrissa's form.

She had grown even bigger since I first saw her, and her limbs looked as if they were completely protected

by hardened skin of deep red. From her back, those horn-like things that protruded... their numbers had grown even more, and they had grown larger.

Floating in the sky, Agrissa looked down over us.

“I’ve misjudged my moderation. As expected of Novem. In order to protect humans, she stuffed memory... and records into her human body. Because of that, I feel I’ll regain my complete form. Well, it’s an ugly one, so I’ll take on human form eventually.”

She turned an eye to me.

“For I cannot embrace you looking like this.”

She said and laughed. With just a single attack, she had blown away a prominent city of the continent. Monica spoke to me.

“Our allies already finished evacuating. While they’ve escaped safely…”

I felt like I would burst into laughter.

“With an attack like that, it’s all the same no matter where they run.”

Agrissa had said she’d held back in that last attack. Flinching at its power, I affirmed my grip on the Katana’s hilt.

“… But even so, we have to stop her here.”

As I glared at Agrissa, she seemed delighted.

“When shown such a difference in power, you’ll still take a stand!? No wonder Novem took a liking to you. And I love those sorts of humans as well. But against me, you’ll only be killed, so… I’ll leave these ones to take you on.”

Looking around, I could see everyone holding up their weapons like me. The remnants of the Valkyries clenched their weapons in both hands as well.

However, it seemed Agrissa didn’t have the intent to keep us company.

“Perhaps one or two of you will die, but… well, if you die, then that’s just

as far as you could go, is all it means. This is my favorite, try to beat him."

Still in her gargantuan form, she made an imposing pose in the air as she snapped her fingers. Around... and through Centralle, as magic-circle-like things manifested, armored knights of bone... the undead began to appear.

But before our own eyes, fully armored with a large sword on his person... the origin of my name, the First's grandfather Lyle showed himself.

"A doll? And the others around are summoning magic?"

There, Agrissa touched a hand to

her mouth.

“I’ve no intent to create monsters like Novem. Those ones only hold such appearances as they strike more fear that way. They’re not really the living dead. Well, to put it simply… all of these ones are dead men. And it won’t go down as it did with Celes. I can call them forth in unlimited numbers. For in this world, the dead outnumber the living!”

I was surprised that they were all dead brought back. Around… the soldiers that filled and flooded the area around the palace made a commotion as they raised their weapons.

“You assembled a force of six

hundred thousand. So I prepared one ten fold. Six million soldiers. As a start, they'll sweep away the surrounding trash. I could just wipe them out myself, but it's more fun to take my time."

As Agrissa laughed, she seemed to be having fun from the depths of her heart.

"You're just playing around!?"

There, Agrissa smiled.

"Yeah, so? Sorry. You're all just too weak for me to take you seriously. But it's no fun if you crumble either. Hmm, I'll leave a tenth and regulate the population of the continent... no, the world. I just can't wait to see how long it will

take to reach ten percent."

I gripped the hilt of my Katana, and as I took a step forward, Agrissa spoke. Touched her lips with her fingertip.

"I'm happy you're looking at me so, but as you do your ancestor comes to kill you."

As I abruptly directed my attention back down, the full plate knight with his greatsword thrust towards me. I was about to parry it with the Katana, when Monica pushed me out of the way and rammed her hammer against it.

"... Fu... tile."

It was shocking to hear a dead soldier speak, but it was surely the

voice of the Walt House ancestor I saw within the memories... that of the hero who vanquished Agrissa.

“Bastard!”

Monica unhanded the hammer. The greatsword cut it through.

From above, Agrissa spoke.

“Without any magic tools. A warrior of an era where gems weren’t commonplace. It was only natural for him to train himself. And he pushed his own Skill to the very limit, polishing his craft to reach the pinnacle of fighters. That man’s a strong one. For he was strong enough to kill me!”

I confirmed Agrissa wasn’t going to attack before slashing at my

ancestors. Aria circled around and tried thrusting with her spear.

“... Fu... tile.”

As he said that with broken words, he swung his sword and took a full turn. Repelling my Katana, and repelling her spear.

Eva fired an arrow, and he grabbed it with his left hand.

“No way!”

As Eva cried out, Elza jumped.

“Then I’ll freeze him with magic!”

While arrows of ice rained down on him, Agrissa laughed from above.

“The past me excelled in magic.

And he's someone who took me down. This isn't a matter you can just brush away like that."

It was just as she said.

"UWaaAAAAAAAAAARRRHH!!"

As he raised a war cry, perhaps he was raising his body enhancements to their limits as he brushed away Elza's ice with his sword. The wind pressure, and it looked as if steam was rising from his armor.

"Che!"

When Gracia tried to prepare flames, he noticed, and closed the distance with her.

"He's fast... Shuffle!"

I swapped Gracia's position with Ludmilla's, and their swords clashed. In regards to Ludmilla's sword she could manipulate at will, he repelled her with simple, honest skill. Ludmilla tried to take distance.

"W-what's with this one!?"

He had used Ludmilla's attempt to take distance to reposition himself. He had brought Ludmilla right between himself and our support, preventing us from offering a ranged offense. This man was accustomed to battle.

Above us, Agrissa laughed.

"They appear in the world from time to time. He was a warrior with

strong instincts by nature. Strong in his base state. And he had polished his power in order to defeat me. Exhilarating, isn't it?"

I took out the silver gun and fired it at Ludmilla. The blue magic bullet jumped past her and hit him directly.

"... No good."

He said as he parted from Ludmilla, this time aiming for Miranda who had Shannon nearby. As I swapped out Shannon with Aria, Miranda and Aria faced our ancestor.

"If it's this!"

Miranda manifested strings from both hands and bound him. When Aria held up her spear and took a

swipe...

“Hmm!”

My string-bound ancestor used brute force to swing Miranda into Aria. As the two were blown off their feet the strings disappeared, and this time I cut at my ancestor.

Catching my strike with his sword, he looked at my face.

“... Light.”

Saying that, he kicked me in the stomach. The moment I was sent into the air, I couldn’t tell what he had done. My sword of tempered rare metal was shattered, and I was shot away.

Agrissa spoke up high.

“Manipulating a number of Skills is a sort of talent. But... devoting it all to a single Skill and taking it to its limits is also an art. He’s really strong, isn’t he? There are barely any of his type left in the world today, so maybe this is a fresh start.”

Just as Agrissa said, he was a type you’d be hard-pressed to find in the current world. Unable to supplement himself with Magic Tools, he was a warrior that fought only with what he was.

Perhaps all the warriors who fought Agrissa long ago were those sorts as well.

Monica came to my side.

“Chicken Dickwad, the army of dead men outside has begun to move. They’ve launched an attack on the allied armies.”

Ludmilla, Gracia and Elza were teaming up to attack the ancestor. Yet those three who were specialized to battle were being played with quite skillfully.

Meanwhile, Clara was conducting emergency measures on Porter. Apparently both its shoulders had gone strange during the impact. The Valkyries were helping her.

“There’s no way they can do anything about a ten-to-one difference.”

As I held my stomach, Aria,

Miranda and Shannon raced over to me. I looked at the sky. At Agrissa's chest, I could see Novem hang limply.

"Lyle, what will you do? You still have something up your sleeve, right?

As Miranda mentioned my ace, the First Generation's final Skill Full Burst, Aria made a conflicted expression.

"If you use it to defeat the enemy before your eyes in one burst, defeating Agrissa up there will be difficult. And even Novem's been taken."

Aria looked up as well. Eva offered support to the fighting three.

I could feel the pain in my stomach recede. Rather than her own injuries, Miranda was prioritizing me and casting healing magic.

Shannon spoke.

“No matter how you go about it, defeating that thing is impossible. She’s in another league. All the Mana all around is gathering to her, and obeying her...”

I stood from my knees.

“Even so, we have to do it. Having come so far, there’s no way I’ll let anyone become part of Agrissa’s collection. And I... still have something I have to say to Novem.”

Looking up at the sky, I reverted the gun back to the necklace, and

gripped the Jewel.

Monica informed me of the outside situation.

“Battle with the dead army has commenced. May and Marina are with them, so our own army is able to buy some time, but a portion of the other armies have run away. In such a situation, I can only say they’ll crumble.”

Before a force of such numbers, the alliance was collapsing.

We had prepared for this moment, but I never thought a goddess who’d regained her powers would be this troublesome. I wanted to settle things before it came to this. As the leading power, I wanted to

settle things before it collapsed. And as an individual, I wanted to defeat Celes and end it all.

Right, as an individual...

“Yeah, I’ll have to use my trump card.”

Saying that, I laughed only to get a few worried looks. I didn’t want to use it for personal reasons. If I used it, the Jewel would go back to being just a gem. And if I used it, all I’d built up to now would disappear.

On top of that...

“I really hate it... why do my Skills have to be so hard to use? The first one didn’t show any effect and yet it just kept stealing away all my Mana.”

Experience... a constantly active Skill that let one gain loads of experience. At the start, it had activated half-way, becoming a useless thing that accomplished nothing more than sucking my Mana away.

“To use Connection, you need to kiss first... what’s more, a deep one.”

As I turned bashful, Miranda smiled.

“And because of that, you’ve become quite skilled at kissing.”

Really, why do my Skills have to be so terrible? Could it be they actually hate me?

“... My last Skill has me lose too

many things."

There, Monica looked at me.

"I'd like to confirm it beforehand. For if you say there's a need for you to throw down your life here, this Monica will forcefully choose the road that allows a damn chicken's survival."

Aria spoke with rage.

"Hey, you should think about Lyle's feelings. You mean you'll let Lyle live on as Agrissa's little doll!?"

Monica.

"If he endures even so, perhaps the chance will come one day. If I let the chicken dickwad die, I would never be able to forgive myself. I

would never be able to look my fallen sisters in the face...”

I spoke to everyone present.

“No, it isn’t my life... How should I put it, in a sense, it’s like being dead, but what it takes isn’t life.”

Shannon looked at me and covered mouth.

“Then your memories!”

“... That would be infinitely better. Perhaps it would be best to just lost my memories of it all.”

Everyone looked at me with eyes that shouted for me to say it already. Ludmilla and the others fighting wanted us to hurry up with it. It seems their hands were full

with containing my ancestor...

I stood and gripped the Jewel.

“What I lose is... my... dammit, I didn’t want to use it!”

Why didn’t I want to use it? There were two large reasons.

First off, my final Skill, ‘Forcefully brought about a single Growth’. Though my body wouldn’t go through the usual pain beforehand. However, as a penalty it held a condition of, ‘Never being able to go through Growth again’.

Honestly, I didn’t care about the latter part. The problem was if I used it, I would have a growth.

“Ah, goddess! All of you, don’t

laugh! You definitely can't laugh! If you laugh, I'll hate you for the rest of my life!"

Saying that, I gripped the Jewel. The greater reason I didn't want to use it was the second one, but I thought there was no choice but to use it here.

As the Jewel glimmered, a pale blue light wrapped around me, raising a wind. While Agrissa's eyes narrowed, it wouldn't take any time for it to activate.

"Ludmilla, Gracia, Elza... Eva, everyone stand down. Don't raise a hand."

And enveloped by light, I called out the final Skill's name.

The final Skill...

“...【Sevens】 activate.”

A gentle breeze swept over the land.

Chapter 332: Sevens

“… 【Sevens】 activate.”

Reacting to my voice, a wind of blue light swept over the area.
The Jewel showed off a glimmer to an extent it had never shown before. Like the final flicker of a candle’s flame.

“Dammit, I didn’t want to have to use it.”

It forcefully induced an immediate single Growth. To me, that meant my memories I didn’t want to remember would be put into mass production again. Well, no matter

what I do, I'm damn cool, so there's no helping that the others carve it into their memory.

But there was something I couldn't forgive. It was that the Jewel would lose its power, and return to being a simple gem.

It meant the Jewel that had accompanied my travels to this point would be reset. It would go back to being a gem with only the Skills recorded onto it.

If you think about how the Skills would remain, perhaps that was for the best, but there was something more precious...

... My thought patterns gradually cleared up. The sensation of power

flowing up from the depths of my body blew away all the fatigue I had built up. And with the Mana expanding and acting up within, it was a sensation you could call reminiscent of libido.

“Here it coooommmeess!!”

As I cried out, from the Jewel, seven weapons...

Manifested around me and pierced into the floor.

The First’s giant sword.
The Second’s bow.
The Third’s sword.
The Fourth’s daggers.
The Fifth’s galient blade.
The Sixth’s halberd.
The Seventh’s gun.

They all stuck into the floor as if to surround me, and Agrissa looked down over me from above. Her eyes narrowed as she inspected my figure.

"... You've forcefully raised your adaptability level. No, they call it Growth in this era. And that Skill... so it's a type that lets you master seven weapons. That's an interesting Skill."

To Agrissa's face full of confidence, I gave a light laugh. Perhaps Agrissa was holding him back, as my ancestor Lyle held up his weapon and took some distance.

I turned to Agrissa and spoke.

"That's where you're wrong. It's

Sevens because I can use seven weapons? I'm not so simple of a man. And come down here already. If you float naked like that, it feels as if I'm peeping on you, does it not? You'd be much cuter if you showed some more modesty, Agrissa."

I said as I brushed away my bangs and got my hairstyle in order. Agrissa looked down over me with a little surprise.

Aria looked at me and lowered her shoulders.

"... Hey, could it be your Skill's actually..."

Before Aria could say it.

"Let me take a guess at what's on

your mind. You think it's a Skill to forcefully manifest me in my flawless, perfect form, don't you? Don't say it, I know. I mean, we all share a bond of love!"

But Shannon, on those words.

"No, we're linked with Connection, so it wouldn't be strange for you to read..."

But the one who cut her off was Monica.

"To think it was a Fever Time. But with this, our chances of victory rise a bit. For the Chicken Dickwad has never lost once while in this state."

To Monica's delight, I shook my head to the side.

“That’s wrong. At the very point I came here, it was my victory! For I’m a man loved too much by the goddess of victory!”

There, Agrissa raised a grand laugh.

“Ahahaha, a post-Growth brings about mental instabilities, so that’s how it affects you. I see, how interesting. The elevation of power from your Growth brings an influence to your mind. But... it’s unacceptable for you to think you can triumph.”

Right after, my ancestor cut in my direction. But I didn’t move. My lovable wives around tried to move for my safety, but I stopped that action.

“You don’t have to do anything. Well, just you watch... it’ll be over before you know it.”

My ancient ancestor approached before my eyes, and as he lifted up his greatsword, I looked at its blade as I laughed. I heard a voice from behind. On that voice everyone turned.

“You’ve called me up at quite a fun time. Well, maybe summoned would be more appropriate.”

The master of that aloof voice pulled a sword from the ground and repelled the greatsword of my ancestor. Perhaps misjudging the length of that invisible blade, my ancestor leapt back.

His silky blond hair cut just so it wouldn't touch his shoulders. Wearing a short, green mantle, holding the invisible blade against his shoulder... the Third looked around.

"Even so, he leaps around quite flashily."

He said and laughed. And the next voice to call out was the Seventh's. drawing out the gun stuck into the floor from the bayonet attached to its muzzle, he fired off a number of rounds into our ancestor who had started to motion once more.

Those bullets he tried to sweep away warped and opened a number of air holes in the ancestor. As he was undead, they would probably

close up, and that was only a matter of time.

“Lyle, you did well. This is an appropriate timing for you to use your trump card.”

The footsteps stopped just before they passed me by, and a hand rested on my shoulder. His other hand was clasped around the galient blade.

“If you could drive her so far, then you’ve done well. We’ll cooperate for the rest of the way.”

And walking off, the Fifth swung his sword, winding its snake-like blade around the ancestor leg. In his opposite leg, a dagger stuck in.

His mid-length blue hair swaying in

the wind, the one making a movement to push up his glasses was the Fourth.

“You’ve grown quite hardy, Lyle. Well, normally I’d want to tell you not to rely on the dead, but if you’re taking on the dead all the same, perhaps there’s no helping it.”

Racing past me, the Sixth with halberd in hand took a swipe and knocked the large sword out of our ancestor’s hands.

“Good grief, you’ve picked a fight with something crazy. Let me help out too.”

As he turned to me, the Sixth laughed. And to my side, with his bow poised in his hands was the

Second in his hunter's clothes. He smiled a bit as he spoke.

"Truth is, I wanted to try it out; this silver bow of yours. Now then, you want plain old me to show off my craft?"

And the arrows he fired changed their course, as if each of them held its own will as they pierced into our ancestor and exploded. As a dead man brought back, he regenerated himself, and the speed he grew back was exceptionally fast. Even the large sword he lost was beginning to grow back from his hand.

But I could tell the battle was already settled.

“Gahahaha, you got big when I wasn’t looking. Looks like you’ve gotten a bit more up to it, but you’ve still got a ways to go!

Drawing the giant sword from the floor, the one who ran forward and leapt was the First. Laughing as he lowered the sword down on our ancestor, the grand blade let off a pale light creating a shockwave through the dead man and a large area behind him.

The same destructive power as ever.

Our barbarian of a founder held that sword over his shoulder.

“This thing’s nice. Feels like I could cut through anything!”

Towards the First, the Second

sighed.

“Cut? Are you sure you don’t mean mash? Just look, there isn’t anything left behind.”

Before my crossed arms, seven individuals had manifested. On the appearance of my allies I had relied on too much, I looked at Agrissa in the sky as I laughed. There, Agrissa spoke.

“So you called back seven individuals recorded in the Jewel. I see, so that’s why... but you guys know no mercy. Even when the one you just brought down was your own predecessor.”

There, the Third was the same as ever.

“Oh well, I’m sure he was in pain, being manipulated by you. Probably. And so we shed tears as we freed our pitiful ancestor from your clutches… you know, that sort of thing?”

The Fourth matched his pace.

“Quite right. I got the feeling he was screaming, ‘Please stop me!’ with his eyes. Probably.”

The Sixth was the same.

“If I was in his shoes, I’m sure I would say the same… Probably.”

There the First was surprised.

“Eh? That was our ancestor!? That threatening guy!? No ways!”

The Second looked at the First.

“Go look in a mirror. You’ll find an even more threatening-looking barbarian reflected back.”

I nodded.

“Sure enough.”

The First chuckled along with the rest of us; all eight laughing together.

Floating Agrissa didn’t seem too pleased with her favorite- our ancestor- having fallen.

“... With an increase of a mere seven, you sure put up quite the strong front. That’s enough. I won’t stop my hands at six million. However many ten or hundred

million dead men I need, I can prepare them to crush you. With your measly numbers, just how far do you think you can fight…"

I tilted my head. The other seven were the same, heavily questioning Agrissa's tone of voice.

And I finally noticed Agrissa was still under some misunderstanding.

It's Sevens because it revives seven ancestors? Of course not.

"It seems you're still misunderstanding something, Agrissa."

There, Shannon gave an, 'Eh!?' in reaction to my words. It seems my allies were under the same misconception as well. Aria, Gracia

and Elza averted their eyes from me. These girls are so idiotically cute.

I looked at the Jewel in the palm of my hand. The blue Jewel sparkled, and inside of it... I could see tiny stars. The blue, shining form of our mother soil, the 'Earth'.

I gripped the Jewel, and thrust out that fist towards Agrissa.

"Sevens... Number Seven. As I carry on the blood of Septem, it's a Skill I can use as a direct line of the Seventh Goddess. Growth? That's nothing more than a bonus. The true meaning of Sevens is..."

Once I had said that much, a large explosion rang out around where

the allied army's formation was stationed. Several explosions, then several dozens, and with hundreds and thousands hammered in, it must have been an extra-large magic.

The Fourth shook as he corrected the positioning of his glasses.

"Sorry, Lyle. There're loads of things I want to say and hear, but... my wife's calling for me, you see. Seems she's a bit angry. Also, Ludmilla-chan, you're with me. Let's go fortify Cartaffs' army."

"... Hah? Um, I don't get what you're saying."

As he said that and warped off with Ludmilla, I saw him off with a wave

of my hand.

Miranda looked over the scene.

“... Those are the ancestors of the Walt House, right? Lyle, just what is this?”

Once she had said that, an individual appeared to place a hand on Miranda and Shannon’s shoulders. Seeing that individual, the Sixth smiled.

“Milleia! So you came here too!”

There, with extreme grace, Milleia-san spoke to the Sixth.

“Yes, dear brother. Frail as I am, I came over to help. So I’ll be borrowing Miranda and Shannon. For battle has already commenced

with Lyle's main force."

Shannon opened her eyes wide, looking up at Milleia-san's face with a surprised expression. I'm sure she couldn't believe the character she played when in front of the Sixth.

"Sis, this is a fak... ow!"

Her shoulder gripped harder, Shannon was shut up through physical means. Milleia-san was smiling.

The Seventh put a hand to his chin as he looked over at where my army was stationed.

"So Maizel went over there. Then we should make for Faunbeux's front. You have to go get them in

shape so they don't rise up against Lyle... damn actor."

That final murmur was directed at Milleia-san.

With sharp eyes that looked as if they'd give off a glint, Milleia-san turned to seem him off, but by that time his form had already disappeared.

The Fifth, perhaps reading the mood.

"Me and Fiennes will go off to help out the armies short on hands. Let's go. Also, you two are going with us."

"Eh? No."

"Wait a second!"

The Fifth led Gracia and Elza off as he warped.

“Sounds like a plan! Milleia, I leave Miranda and Shannon in your hands!”

With a serious expression, and smiling towards me at the end, the Sixth disappeared. As that was happening, the Third seemed to be thinking a while.

“Then I’m going to go off and do the job no one else is doing. That’s how it is; have fun.”

He said and faded away.

The remaining First and Second looked at Milleia.

“Hey, who’s she?”

"... Like hell I know."

In that dubious air, Milleia-san gave a curtsy. It was quite a neat and tidy one.

"Pleasure to meet you, Founder, and Second Generation Head. I am Milleia... one of Fredricks' daughters. I'm in a bit of a hurry, so I'll be borrowing these two."

And she looked at me, closing one of her eyes.

"Lyle, go with a bang. You've got the Walt House behind you, so have some peace of mind."

She disappeared as she led Miranda and Shannon off. As I waved my hand and saw them off, the First and Second stared blankly.

“Somehow, seems there’re a lot of things we don’t know.”

“Well, we were the first ones to dissapear, after all.”

And up in the sky was an irritated presence. ‘Twas Agrissa.

“... I see. So that’s what it means.”

I cleared my throat. In order to give the explanation of my Skill I couldn’t give before.

“That’s right. This is my final Skill. Sevens... a Skill that allows me to take over the complete management authority of the Jewel system Septem created. This one’s amazing, I mean... it lets me use the Jewel’s full power with all its restrictions removed.”

Aria, Clara and Eva made expressions to say they didn't get it. But Monica and the Valkyries nodded.

"So that's what it is. Management authority... then this Mana flowing into our systems is also a byproduct of that. For now, we should give our thanks."

The Valkyries' armor glowed. What was originally Tressy... the Trident Serpent. Made of a monster once called the god of the seas, those girls who were a mass of Rare Metals were beginning to be affected.

Their wings spread out, and they had begun to float in the air. Monica was the same. Cloaked in a

white dress, she was floating as well.

“Oh, so you quit being a maid to become my bride?”

As I said that, Monica smiled.

“Yes, so you’d better take me.”

... She sure is an idiot.

“Are you an idiot? You’re already mine. It’s not even a matter of taking you or not.”

There, Eva looked at me.

“Why is this guy always so obstinate? When he’s usually such a wimp.”

The First looked over at me.

“Are you alright? And wait, where’s Novem-chan? Ah! Aria-chan!”

Aria- with the First waving at her- gave a light wave herself. The First was pushing for Aria, so I’m sure he was happy to meet her. The girl in question.

“Eh? Why does he looked so happy?”

There, Agrissa who had watched us carry on that farce without an end in sight.

“... You sure know how to parade your leisure. But it seems you’ve gotten a little too stuck up. Lyle, it looks like it would be best for me to fold your heart first.”

Pff, I gave a small laugh.

“... If I, Lyle Walt, had a heart that folded so easily, I’d never think to kill a god. I fear the strength of my own mentality... if you think you can fold me, just try it!”

Perhaps angry, Agrissa spread her arms.

From within Porter, Clara...

“... Though once you regain your sanity, you’ll fold on your own.”

Spewed some sarcasm. I think that part of her’s cute as well.

“Then I’ll take you up on that offer! Try this on for size!”

Right below Agrissa appeared a giant ape, white with a reddened face. While there was no fur

growing on its pectoralis muscles, that monkey with a beautiful white coat covering all else was even larger than Agrissa.

“That’d have to be a good ten meters.”

As the First said that, the Second...

“I think you mean twenty.”

... Immediately corrected him. To add onto to that, skeletal knights over two meters each had begun sprouting up from the floor.

Agrissa called from above.

“Learn the shame of your blunder, putting on airs from mere administrative privilege. Lyle, I’ll prepare a bit of a harsher

punishment for you. I'll discipline you until you weep as you swear loyalty to me."

I hung the Jewel around my neck. And I held out my right hand to Monica. As she tossed my spare Katana at me, I accepted it as I spoke.

"That sounds fun. I'd like to try that once, but I want it normal the first time. Even if I look like this, I'm a virgin here. I'd be troubled if you made it too stimulating. I'll at least permit ropes and whips... though I'd prefer to be on the giving side!"

Agrissa opened her large mouth.

"Shut it! I don't think I like you when you're like this!"

I smiled.

“But I like you. Well, I at least find you pitiful. That’s why... so you don’t go through any pain, I’ll end you here myself.”

The large ape lowered its fist at us. Unlike a monster... it seemed to be closer to a quilin or whale. It spit flames from its mouth as it intimidated us.

Those flames lightly singed the First’s trademark fur pelt.

“The hell do you think you’re doing, damn ape! You’ve got yourself a fight, let’s take this outside!”

The Second took a stance with his bow.

"... Dad, we're already outside."

The roof and walls had been blown away, the lower floors crushed. I see, we really were outside. The three of us chuckled amongst ourselves some more.

There, the First made a serious expression.

"Well, looks like things'll be bad if I don't get serious, so I guess I should... come out, you lot."

There, behind the First, what was once his door of memories appeared. From it streamed the soldiers and barbarians who had once followed his rule. While I couldn't see him as anything but a barbarian chieftain, that was the

Founder I knew.

The Second spoke in a low voice.

“Should I call mine too? I can at least take care of the smaller skeletons and provide support.”

Soldiers that had gotten themselves a little more organized appeared alongside the manifestation of the Second’s door. In their hands they held bows and hunting knives.

The First let a ferocious smile grace his face.

“So you’ve learned to say it! Crassel! Lyle!”

“Yes?”

“Leave this ape and the small fries

to us. You go and knock Agrissa down a few pegs. And where's Novem-chan?"

"Oh, if you're looking for her, she's in Agrissa's chest. She was captured."

"... Hah? Y-you... what do you think you're doing, dammmiiiitttt!!"

As the First cried out, the white monkey raised its war-cry again. Perhaps it thought the First was trying to intimidate it.

I held the Katana over my shoulder.

"Well, I'm going off to save her then. Aria, Clara, Eva... and Monica and the Valkyries, follow my lead. It's fun godslaying time!!"

Aria held up her spear.

“There’s definitely something a little off with you. No, definitely something off period! Why can you enjoy godslaying like that!?”

I spoke.

“Fool! By killing some sham of a goddess, we get the godslayer title for ourselves! It’ll make future rule much easier! Clara, Eva, don’t let my gallant form slip your eyes.”

Clara and Eva pulled back a bit. Rather than a little, what the hell is he saying at a time like this? Is the feeling they were giving off. I was sure they would have liked that one.

But Monica and the Valkyries were all for it.

“Hooray! Now I can finally fairly beat the hell out of them! This Monica will follow Lyle-sama to the end of her days!”

She sure knows what to say to make a man happy. I turned to Agrissa with a provocative smile. And she looked down on me in irritation.

“Now... let’s have some fun with it!!”

Chapter 333: Army of the Dead vs. Army of the Dead

… Lyle's army.

Its main body had immediately set up stockades, using magic to prepare a moat.

From within the stockades, taking on the dead army so they could approach no further, even though Lyle wasn't among the forces that had returned from the city, General Blois wasn't perturbed.

In the remains of Centralle's royal palace, even now there were some

figures visible, and some sort of battle was carrying on. Then they were fighting on… Lyle's survival was a possibility, is what it meant.

"But these numbers are…"

The army of armored skeletons in numbers to bury the scenery before his eyes came out of the ruined ramparts one after the next. What he learned from fighting them: their strength was nothing special. But receiving normal attacks, they would just regenerate.

They couldn't come back if blasted to shreds with magic, but it's not as if they could keep blasting them away for eternity.

"Overwhelming resources. I guess it

is a means of certain victory."

To General Blois as he broke into a cold sweat, raced Baldoir. Maksim and Alette were with him.

"General Blois, I'd like to form a unit to rescue Lyle-sama!"

"N-no, but in this situation..."

While Alette was trying her best to talk him out of it, Baldoir wasn't lending an ear.

As Baldoir said that, Maksim looked at General Blois and shook his head. They had tried to persuade him, but it was no good.

The general scratched his head.

"... The Valkyries are still

operational, and their battle still rages on. What's more, under these circumstances, who's to say a charge would be able to make it to the palace. No, it's fundamentally impossible to reach."

Seeing Baldoir's face, General Blois understood the man knew his choices were wrong. His emotions were running ahead of his mind.

While the desire to save his lord was just, that wasn't a decision that would win a war. Vexed, Baldoir clenched his fist.

"Sending men out to die is..."

Once that much was said, a number of blue lights manifested. On the other side of the stockades, two

lights suddenly came to be.

Those three and the surrounding soldiers turned to look.

“That’s no good. A commander should always stay level-headed. You’ll spread unrest around.”

The one who appeared from the light was Maizel with a sword in one hand. With his left hand, he traced his beard, swinging the sabre with his right.

The skeletal soldiers around were blown away and torn apart. From the other light, a woman came out.

“Woman over there, carry yourself more boldly. There’s a difference between being concerned for and reserved from your husband. If you

don't say what must be said, the man will never understand."

That woman with a staff... was Lyle's mother Claire. Holding up her staff, she blew the surrounding skeletons away with a gust of magic.

Lightning dwelled in the blade of Maizel's Sabre and he swung it forth.

"Hahaha, I've no comeback to that. But there are a bit too many. I should call the others."

Claire nodded to Maizel's opinion.

"Yes, at the very least... we must protect the place for Lyle to return."

There, a large door appeared in

front of the stockades. From it streamed soldiers in quick succession.

In his surprise, Baldoir ran forwards.

For there was the form of Beil on his horse. Across the stockade, Baldoir and Beil had met once more.

“U-uncle...”

Maizel and Beil who were supposed to be dead, alongside legions of soldiers and knights; the scene was one Baldoir couldn’t understand.

The forms of splendid knights before Celes drove them mad.

“Baldoir, have you been well!”

The ones coming out of the doors were the soldiers and knights who had lost their lives in the battle against Lyle, and even the ones who had fallen after that.

As the soldiers gathered around Maizel, they took down the nearby enemy dead.

“Beil!”

“Hah!”

As Beil urged on his horse and raced to Maizel’s side, Maizel stuck his sabre into the ground.

“... As a parent, there’s no way I could look him in the eye. But at the very least I want to be of some use. I’ve put that child through a lot.”

“... We’re all in the same boat, Maizel-sama. Those thoughts that dwell within all of us haven’t wavered.”

Claire looked down, clenching down on her staff.

“... Lyle, you’ve grown up splendidly. I’ve no qualifications to say it. But if only for the slightest moment, if I can work for your sake...”

The streams of soldiers manifesting defeated the warriors of bone. Seeing them like that, the living soldiers of the Walt House all the same rushed to their aid.

Many of them shed tears as they fought.

“Father, father!!”

A young soldier called out a middle-aged man.

“Who the hell cries on a battlefield? If we lose here, just what do you plan to say to the young master!? ... If you plan on being trouble, then give me back that spear in your hands! You’re my son, aren’t you.”

Elsewhere, a knight locked hands with the dear friend he reunited with.

And Maizel wrung out his voice.

“Courageous men of the Walt House. And soldiers of Lyle. We have yet to settle things. So I’ll swallow down my shame and make a plea. A little is enough... do you have the mind to lend strength to

this Maizel Walt!? For the sake of victory!”

Crossing the stockade, one and then another soldier crossed the stockade, lining up by the comrades they once fought alongside. The crushed morale was beginning to build up once more.

General Blois looked upon the scene.

“This isn’t a normal battlefield anymore.”

He muttered as he looked at the blue light appearing to his side...

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… The eastern front centered around Faunbeux.

At Margrave Resno's camp, his son Balfeld appeared. Varius rose from his seat and approached his son.

"Y-you're… alive?"

There, Balfeld gave a bit of a sorrowful laugh.

"Sorry father. I went and died. But for now, I've been given just a bit of time. So I came to apologize. I'm sorry."

The crying Varius wiped away his tears.

"I regret sending you to the site of

your death. I always wanted to apologize. Sending you to the likes of Celes... I'm sorry."

Balfeld placed a hand on the crumbling Varius' shoulder.

"Father... lend us your power. We can't leave that one be. If we let her run rampant, it isn't just the continent. The whole world will end. Father... please lend us your strength."

Varius stood. And he looked at the end of Balfeld's gaze, at the something of human form floating up in the sky.

"... Understood. Leave it to me. And Parselena and Blaubreigh are in good health."

Hearing that, Balfeld... the heir to the Margrave of Resno who had been sent to Bahnseim royalty as a hostage- laughed...

“I see. Then I can rest at peace.”

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... At the Faunbeux camp, the king and his close associates had gone weak at the knees.

Before their eyes was the demon who once chased them about and cut their land away.

His name was Brod Walt. Seventh Generation Head of the Walt

House.

“It’s been a while, whelp. You’ve grown quite a bit. By the way, there’s something I must ask… why is it that your army is making preparations to flee?”

Around the Seventh were the soldiers of the Walt House, sprinkling their glares around. The Seventh didn’t really need them right now, but they increased his intimidating air so he had brought them along.

“T-that’s…”

To the trembling king, the Seventh sent a gentle laugh. But his eyes weren’t laughing.

“You can’t mean to say you’ll leave

your leader, my grandson behind and run away yourself? For argument's sake, I'll tell you... if you run, I'll chase you to the ends of the earth. I do hope you still have that swiftness of foot you showed me on the battlefield."

Saying that, the Seventh left the tent and stood before his own army that had gathered.

"Hmm! What a spectacle! As expected of my armies!"

Before the army he had trained and organized himself, the Seventh was satisfied. And before his soldiers.

"... Elites of the Walt House. If we stay silent at this crisis, it will threaten the lives of our

grandchildren and great-grandchildren. It's not so good a thing for the dead to make a ruckus, but my grandson taking on the goddess... for Lyle's sake, I'd like you to lend me your power."

Without a thread's breadth of disjoint in their movements, everyone corrected their posture. The Seventh nodded and looked to the young man leading his horse. It was old man Zell in his younger days.

Straddling the horse, the Seventh spoke to Zell.

"Zell, my grandson's been in your care. I have one more job I'd like you to do. Will you accompany me?"

“It’s an important battle for the young master. I’ll happily tag along, Brod-sama!”

His horse trot down the center of his lines of men. The soldiers took right-about face, and abided his orders. Right ahead of them, an army of skeletons closed in. The Seventh held up his gun.

“Attack.”

As the Walt House’s army moved to action, the troops of Faunbeux watched the scene with their mouths hung over. The skeletal soldiers kicked and blown about...

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… The King of Faunbeux sobbed in the tent the Seventh had left behind.

“Dammit! Dammit! This is why I didn’t want to get involved with the Walt House! Those guys torment Faunbeux even when they’re dead! Just how far does he plan on chasing me!?”

His trauma of the chase in his past revived, what’s more, this time the man himself had made his appearance.

Those around were unable to caution the king. For they held the same feelings themselves.

There a blue light appeared once

more.

The king kicking and squirming on the ground raised a scream.

“Again! Who is it this time!? Is it Fiennes! That legendary demon!”

Instead of Fiennes, who the king called a demon, the King’s father... the young figure of the previous generation’s king appeared.

A man of valor who matched blades with Fiennes.

“... What’s with that shape.”

The authorities around opened their eyes in a different form of surprise to what they had shown the Seventh. While he had lost to Fiennes, he was still a splendid man

and king. Many of the authorities had looked up to him in their youths.

“F-father…”

Before his aged son, the previous generation’s king crossed his arms. He stood dauntingly.

“You’ve lost your spine at such a vital point!? At your age, you’re sure to have children, correct! Where are my grandchildren!? Why aren’t they here!”

The king of Faunbeux averted his eyes.

“N-no… you see, my sons all have their own business to attend to.”

The previous generation lowered

his fist at the king. It seems he had seen through what the King of Faunbeux was scheming.

“You’re doing something petty again! What do you think your doing at such an important time, you fool! That’s enough! Get the troops together at once. Know that this battle shall become a legend our decedents will speak of for eternity! Oy, whelp over there!”

The white-streaked knight captain in splendid armor had earned a new title of whelp. He corrected his posture.

“Y-yes!”

“I have troops of my own as well. Come under my command at once.

When even that Fiennes is here, there's no way I can keep silent. Let's show them the backbone of Faunbeux!"

The tent was in quite a flurry...

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... Lyle's main camp. The back lines.

"Hop, step, right straight!"

The one sent flying by Milleia's right fist was the one who had gotten Centralle's imperial nobles together in a joint attempt to flee. A certain Ralph.

Miranda and Shannon were watching from behind.

The two of them were drawing back.

“B-bastard! Imposter!”

Ralph yelled at her, but holding his face with his right hand, his legs were shaking, and he couldn’t stand. He had been hit with considerable force.

With a smile, Milleia drew her gun and fired a shot nearby his right ear.

“Eek!”

“What’s this? Have you forgotten little old Milleia-chan who scolded you whenever you were up to no

good? What a terrible grandson. Granny is so sad her hand might slip next time."

With the gun in her hand and her tone, Ralph remembered that the individual before his eyes was his grandmother Milleia.

"M-my grandmother is dead, and she was never so young... eek!"

Another bullet dug in near his body. Milleia spoke as she reloaded bullets into her two guns.

"Using your daughter to rise up in the world, well fine by me. You're an imperial noble, so I'm not particularly angry at that one."

"U-um... grandma?"

While Ralph made a stately face, his complexion spoke for itself. Seeing that, Miranda and Shannon clung onto one another. They were afraid.

“But you see, looking at the result, you’ve lost any and everything, haven’t you? Doesn’t that mean you failed? ... and you have the guts to take that failure and act like you never had those daughters at all. What’s more, as a former feudal-noble, I can’t forgive you for personal reasons. Driving out your own daughters... granny is sad.”

She pushed the gunpoint against his temple. Those around tried to capture Milleia, but they couldn’t get any closer.

“F-forgive me, grandmother!”

“Very well.”

She nonchalantly changed her expression into a smile. But the next words to come out of her mouth.

“However, if you’re going to climb back up from there, then show your resolve. Not at this rear line, go up front with your weapons in hand, and fight. Don’t worry, your grandma will help you out. At the very least, you’ve got to do that much, or these children will never think any better of you. And… fulfill your obligations as nobles, you shitheads!”

She threatened the imperial nobles

who had tried to flee at the shots ringing out in the air.

“Without doing a thing, you don’t intend to merely gather together like parasites, do you? When you’re putting your lives on the line, you’d better do it properly. Those who simply sit back and drink the good stuff; I… hate them enough to want to kill them.”

As everyone hurriedly held their weapons, Milleia turned to Miranda and Shannon.

“Girls, with this, your futures are a little more stable. Now all that’s left is to earn Lyle’s affections, and you’ll be able to stand against the others. Also… you all better risk your lives to support these children.

Betray and you're dead. Hold them back and you're also dead. Remember this. Women of the Walt House... will chase you to the depths of hell."

A smile to Miranda and Shannon, a sharp glare and low threat to the rest.

"... Sis, our great grandmother is scary."

Shannon clung onto Miranda as she said that. Miranda as well.

"That's right. I'm scared too."

There, Milleia looked a little sorrowful.

"Goddess, you two are terrible! When I went out of my way to earn

you allies for your future!”

Hmph, she gave a cutesy angry gesture so vivid you could almost see the sound effects...

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... Cartaffs’ front.

A single man of light-blue mid-length hair was kneeling before a woman of small build, who could be taken as a little girl by circumstance.

“... I’m deeply sorry for being late! There were lots of things I wanted to talk about.”

There, the small woman sat in the seat she's prepared, snapping the fingers of her left hand. A glance from a stranger was enough to tell she was angry.

As her fingers sounded, the skeletal army was blown away by magic spells erupting from the ground one after the next. Fire, wind, water, earth, they all seemed to raise explosions as they spouted up from the soil.

"Hmm~, so they're more important to you than me."

Ludmilla looked over the scene.

(That woman is a pain.)

Or so she held the impression. The soldier of Cartaffs around- upon the

sudden appearance of the small girl who blew the undead away with her magic- tried to use the time to regroup.

“No, you see... everyone had gathered and all.”

“... Hey, why won’t Fredricks come over here? Fiennes could at least show me his face.”

Snapping her fingers again, an even larger array of magic burst from the ground.

“T-they’re quite busy and... l-look! There are still places short on hands!”

The small woman slowly stood.

The blue-haired man with glasses

jumped up and retreated a few steps.

“I’m sorry! I’ll go call them at once!”

But the woman let out a sigh.

“Hah, it’s fine. You should lead your own retainers and men. Once we clean up the small fries before our eyes, we can go off to Fredricks’ and Fiennes’ place. And Lyle, was it? He’s quite something, to take Bahnseim down and found an empire of his own. Weak as I might be, I think I’ll help him out.”

The man... the Fourth pat his chest. Ludmilla thought.

(Weak? This is weak!?)

The undead army blown away by

magic, even a single shot had taken out a considerable number of them, dismembering and leaving them immobile.

At the small woman who called that weak, Ludmilla shuddered.

“T-that’s good. I was worried you might oppose taking down the country.”

“Why would I? Well, I’ll say I didn’t have the power in my time. But... if the world was within my reach, of course I’d do anything in my power to pluck it for myself! Very well, the opportunity has come for me to relieve my grudges of responsibility. My blood shall reach all below the heavens! ... how amusing.”

A strong will dwelled in the little woman's eyes, as she showed her motivation. This time she snapped her right hand, and magic rained down from the sky.

"Ahahaha, let's make a grand pile! I'll show you, Bahnseim... my blood shall put an end to you!"

Ludmilla turned to the Fourth.

"Looks like you had it rough. Um, my condolences."

On those words, the Fourth brushed his hair with a hand.

"Isn't she just the cutest?"

He said and laughed. Ludmilla thought.

(Well maybe they're made for one another. Though I don't want this sort of coupling for myself.)

As she thought that, the small woman called out to her.

"And you over there."

"Something the matter?"

"... If you're to become a bride of the Walt House, you'd best resolve yourself. I had my troubles too."

"... Eh?"

Why the woman who was blowing all the dead before her away was troubled was something Ludmilla couldn't understand.

To her side, the Fourth tilted his

head.

“You think? I thought we were a relatively cozy generation.”

The woman covered her face with her hand.

“Cozy? That was cozy? I was put through hell by mother-in-law you know? Well whatever. Let me check and see if you’re worthy of being a bride of the Walt House. Follow me.”

“Eh? Ah!”

As Ludmilla was dragged off by the hand, the nervous soldiers of Cartaffs followed her from behind...

Chapter 334: The Shape of a Family

… Before the army that constituted the main force of the southern front, two additional armies had appeared.

Jules, the King of Djanpear, removed his helmet, sweeping his hair to the back.

“… Good grief, it’s almost like I’m seeing a dream or something. This is just like a battle of legend.”

To his side, the man serving as his adjutant looked at him with worry.

“Your majesty.”

“Worry not. The ones before us are allies. Yep, let’s pray they’re allies. And don’t you think this is an opportunity? At present we are quite possibly casting our bodies into a battle of... legendary, nay... mythical proportions. It will most likely become an honor to last through eternity.”

Saying that, Jules put his helmet back on. Pulling the sword at his waist, he hoisted it up towards the heavens and cried out.

“Heroic warriors of Djanpear, march onwards without fear!”

As Djanpear began to move, the surrounding countries began pressing forwards as well...

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... As the Fifth swung that silver, Galient blade, it took the shape of a serpent to pulverize skeletal soldiers one after the next.

To his side, the Sixth swept them away with his silver halberd. Once the two had finished cleaning up the surroundings, they looked around.

The Fifth let out a light breath. When he turned, the lines of soldiers were in an offensive formation.

“Now then, it looks like the

preparations are in order."

The Sixth pierced his halberd into the ground.

"Right you are. But what shall we do from here? If we're going to direct an attack on Centralle, it would be best we get all our forces together..."

The Fifth shook his head to the side.

"Your army is built around my sons. There's no way in hell we'd be able to coordinate our attacks. You be the main shaft, and I'll go around to support."

The Sixth crossed his arms.

"That so... but we can't be having

that."

The Fifth looked at the Sixth, leaning his galient blade against his shoulder.

"We're in a hurry. If you've something to say, can't it come later..."

There, two armies assembled around the Fifth. The same fighting style, and moving by the same training and regulations, those armies without the slightest difference in their motions gathered around the Fifth.

And a number of mounted knights rode their horses to surround him. Everyone held a weapon, turned in the direction of Centralle.

The Fifth.

“... You’re all...”

The Sixth, his force finally arriving, mounted it and wrung out his voice.

“Pops... this is the army you trained. And this is our consensus!”

The knights gathered around lifted the visors of their helmets; lifted them up and looked at the fifth.

“Our mothers are watching. Hurry it up.”
“Well, we were told a few things after you’d died.”
“Though I’d have preferred you dealt with us more decently. I got a lot of thinking in after I had a child of my own.”

Bashful and fed up, yet still they all gathered around the Fifth, awaiting his orders. Once the two armies had gotten together, the Fifth hid his face with his left hand.

“You’re all way too skilled to be my sons. You must take after your mothers.”

Not only the sons, the grandsons took part as well. The army the Fifth built up, linked by the firm bond of blood, amassed and showed its completed form.

“... Good grief, so it’s true what they say. When the parents are no good, the child’s a genius.”

As he said that, a blue light manifested nearby the Fifth.

Starting with his horse, the animals the Fifth had doted on.

And five women made their appearance. The surrounding knights corrected their postures, while the Sixth straightened his spine.

“Fredricks, we’ll help out too.”
“Frail as I am, I’ll lend assistance in the Walt House’s time of crisis.”
“At such an amus… important scene, it’s not like I’m going to hide just because I’m a woman.”
“The hammer of retribution falls on Bahnseim who abandoned us in our troubles!”
“Your daughters are ready too. Milleia alone left for elsewhere.”

The Fifth’s legal wife and

mistresses. They wore dresses, pinching the hems of their skirts and lifting them to present a tidy greeting.

The Fifth looked a little embarrassed.

“Y-yeah.”

He replied. The animals watched him as well. There, around the Sixth, blue light began to appear. He burst into a cold sweat.

“... Oh goddess, me too...?”

As he leaked that complaints, from nowhere in particular, one of his younger brothers said, ‘unfortunately, yes’. The one who appeared from the light was a beautiful woman of blond hair and

blue eyes. But the look in her eyes was scary.

From behind her, two women in ill temper came out. Both of them fidgeted with their hair, showing off quite a terrible attitude.

The blond woman looked at the Sixth.

“... So you didn’t want to see us so badly?”

The Sixth forced a smile as he turned to his wives.

“What are you talking about? With your strength, we’ve the force of a hundred men! It’s as if we’ve already won this battle before it began! Right, pops!?”

The Fifth averted his eyes.

“Yeah, something like that.”

And from around, some fed-up gazes rested on the Sixth. Those who shouldered large familial problems, the Fifth and the Sixth. While they shared that trait, the relationship between husband and wife seemed more tranquil on the Fifth’s side.

The Fifth whispered.

“That’s why I told you multiple would be hell. Hah, you think Lyle will be alright?”

The Fifth’s worried eyes turned to the remains of Centralle’s royal palace... to Lyle’s party squaring off against Agrissa.

“Whatever the case, let’s make it flashy. The dead are just overflowing out there. Let’s charge right up close, solidify our defenses there, and start crushing them down as soon as they appear. Easy, right? Much easier than a fleeing band of bandits.”

As the Fifth said that, everyone prepared their weapons, entering a formation for offense.

There, the female camp.

“Then let us clear a path before your charge.”

Saying that, the women who appeared... were the Fifth’s daughters. His granddaughters were among them. The Fifth’s legal wife

raised her hand.

“Do your best to support Fredricks. And put on a good show. This is an important battle for the Walt House.”

The Fifth mounted his horse.

“... Charge!”

Instantly responding to his call, the army of a few ten thousands charged towards the dead. From behind, the female camp’s support was...

“The bastard ran away! At the very least, he could’ve made it clear who the number one was at the end! Burn it all to the ground!”
“Ahahaha, my powers are swelling within!”

“I can only use plain magic here. The type that drags them into the dirt... hah, I really am plain.”

The charging men directed their eyes at the Sixth.

One of his brothers spoke.

“Oy, whose wives are they supposed to be again, bro?”
“It’s always hard to believe.”
“At least make it clear at the end. Don’t run away to the battlefield. Even when you were alive, you were always like that!”

Receiving the criticism of his brothers, the Sixth forcefully laughed and gripped his halberd with both hands. There, the Halberd split in two.

“Come at me, and learn what it really means to be dead! All you bastards out there, this Fiennes Walt will take you on!”

Swinging both his halberds around on horseback, he charged to the front lines. He had the physique and majesty, making him look needlessly reliable.

“Dammit! He ran away again!”
“Chase after him!”
“Teach him just how much trouble he caused us in life!”

Perhaps tormented by the strife the Sixth’s wife’s brought about in their lives, the Sixth’s younger brothers charged out as well.

The Fifth let out a sigh, as he

relayed precise orders to his army. The army followed his will, showing movements as if it was all a single living being. When the path was cut off by soldiers of the dead, the rounds of magic fired from the rear in great number would never strike an ally.

So precise was he that his army pressed on as if it knew no fear at the extra-large magic raining down from above.

But the Fifth.

“That one was dangerous! Who was it, who was the one who tried to drop magic on our forces!”

One of his sons spoke up.

“It goes without saying it was my

sister-in-laws! Dammit! If I was anywhere close to my brother, I'd have been dragged in... this is bad."

It was as bad as he said. From behind, and ominous oversized serpent with a body of black flames appeared. It slithered across the ground as it swallowed in dead soldiers, burning them away as it made their way towards them.

The Fifth cried out.

"Press forwards! Whatever happens, press forwards! Fiennes, you pull back and deal with your wives already! Oy, I know you can hear me!"

The Fifth cried out, but the Sixth purposefully gave a grand laugh as

he cut forward. No... he ran away...

“Ahahaha, there’s nothing but small fries out here!”

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... In contrast to the flashy rampages in Centralle’s circumference, there were few dead to be found in its central districts.

It was a situation almost like a donut, and the space near Agrissa had cleared up to make a place of scarce population.

The one proceeding through such a space was the Third with a few

hundred soldiers. The knight who was the progenitor of the Randbergh House called out towards him.

“Sleigh-sama, we found them! Bahnseim’s royalty!”

The Third was leaning his invisible blade against his shoulders, treading lightly over the mountains of rubble.

“Hmm, I did think they’d be alive, but unharmed, eh? As expected of royalty. Seems they brought quite a bit along with them.”

Magic tools and other special equipment.

While Centralle had been blown away, the royal line had survived.

Of course, the Third had anticipated that. They were royalty. They'd at least carry some special tools on their person.

There was the King, the Queen and Crown Prince.

The King turned the bracelet that enveloped his right hand towards the Third.

"A-are you dead men as well! Don't come any closer!!"

A golem appeared, likely summoned from the bracelet. No, it was dubious whether or not it was a golem. A something of humanoid form a few meters high and made of stone came at the Third's party.

"Is that what you used to defeat the

dead soldiers? Well, I'm happy you survived. I mean... it would be most troublesome if your whereabouts became unknown."

Everyone took a stance with their weapons, but a blue light made its appearance behind the Third. From it, a large steel ball about the size of a human head shot out, hitting the doll's abdomen and piercing it through. That human form crumbled away.

The ball was connected to a chain, and making a clanging jingle, it was sucked back into the light. Once the blue light died down, there stood a single woman.

"Good grief, you're always flaunting that leisure of yours. You look plain

unreliable to those watching."

The woman holding the chain connected to the steel ball was the Third's wife.

"I'm sorry. Well, you think it would've been dangerous if it came to my sword? Oh right, more importantly, let's tie up the royalty. If they get away, it'll be troublesome when they become the banner of a rebel force."

The Third had searched out the royalty, or perhaps tried to find traces of their deaths. For they would be a hindrance to Lyle's rule.

There was a possibility they could run away in this situation, so he wanted to restrain them swiftly.

“What’s more, it looks like they’re still alive, so we can even make them take responsibility.”

Towards the smiling Third Generation Head, the Crown Prince Rufus drew the sword at his waist. It seems he had been freed from Celes’ influence.

“Y-you’re in the presence of royalty! Name yourself!”

The Third smiled wider.

“For even his voice to be the same, he really is a descendent, is what I’m feeling. Well, since it’s come to this, I guess I’ll give my name. Third Generation Head of the Provincial Noble Walt House… Sleigh Walt. I came here from hell.”

Before the Third's lighthearted declaration, the royal remnants seemed confused. Normally it would be impossible, but the day had already been a stream of impossible things.

Dead men and soldiers of bone. What's more Celes died, and a monster was floating in the sky.

But the king muttered.

"The Walt House again? Just how far, how far will they prowl after the name of Bahnseim?"

In contrast to the king's terribly mortified face, Rufus cried out in rage.

"What impudence! Sleigh Walt-dono was the righteous general of

Bahnseim. I will not allow you to sully his name!”

But in the next instant, the Third’s face turned serious. His soldiers quietly surrounded the royal line.

“Righteous general? That’s not something you should joke around about. Because of your ancestor, I had no choice but to attack and die. And after that he even steals away my achievements and calls me the righteous general of Bahnseim? It doesn’t delight me in the slightest to have such a legacy built up. Now pay your tab for snatching all the Walt House’s achievements from the birth of this accursed Kingdom of Bahnseim.”

There, Rufus spoke.

“Such talk from an imposter. Such a thing is…”

He tried to retort, but perhaps the king knew the truth as his face turned pale.

“… No, he’s the real deal. There’s no doubt about it. The records of our line of kings has stated it so. To be wary of the Walt House. But to think that three hundred year grudge would visit on my generation…”

A grudge against the Bahnseim House had led to this, or so the king had interpreted it. Sleigh was about to explain, but the first to open their mouth was his wife.

“Silence! We didn’t even know of

such a thing of the past! But leading your land to such depravity, it's only natural you take responsibility for your ineptitude to rule. It's merely a coincidence that the Walt House is to come next. Blaming your own failures on some Walt House grudge... learn some shame!"

As she slammed the solid metal ball against the ground, a subterranean tremor rang about. Sleigh corrected his sentiment and posture, giving a purposeful clearing of his throat.

"Eh~ ahem! Well, that's how it is. Truth is, our descendent Lyle said he wants to be emperor, so I decided to help him. To be quite honest, I couldn't care less about what happened three hundred years ago, and I'm irrelevant."

The royalty opened their mouths in a daze. Rufus spoke.

“F-for a reason as petty as that... the Bahnseim Dynasty that’s carried on for three hundred years...! ... Bhah!!”

The Third’s fist smacked into Rufus’ face, sending him flying a distance. And the Third spoke with quite a refreshing smile.

“But you see, since I was sent to die in vain, I think I’m fully justified to smack you. That bastard made good use of my death... now then, you’ve used us left and right as you sat back and relaxed in your palace. Isn’t that enough? ... So why don’t you do one last job for Lyle’s sake.”

The Third’s knights and soldiers

restrained the three remaining royals.

“G-get away! Unhand me!”

“Who do you think I...”

The Third’s soldiers apprehended Bahnseim’s royal line’s survivors. Meanwhile, the Third’s wife spoke to him in worry.

“Now then, we’ve gone and delivered some justice, but... do you think our descendent Lyle will be alright? He won’t turn out worse than the Bahnseim royal line, will he?”

In the worst case, it would come back around like a boomerang, leaving quite an unsavory end.

The Third chuckled.

“Who knows? A king’s rule is what the people of the world to come will judge. But while I doubt it’ll be the best, won’t he get everything together in stable rule? He’s at least got that much in him.”

The Third turned his eyes towards the Royal palace. And once he returned them to his wife.

“And here are some words I could never say when I was alive. Perhaps there’s no meaning for a record like me to say it, but say it I will. I caused you some trouble. And thank you. It’s because of you that the Walt House came so far.”

With those words, his wife gave a

warm smile, her face turning a little red.

“It’s because you’re like that, that you always... now let’s be off. There’s still things left for us to do!”

“That’s right. Let’s go. And you really are the best woman around. You’re wasted on me.”

Seeing the back of his wife as she showed her motivation, the Third followed behind.

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Third Generation Head (´∀｀): “Everyone sure has it rough, Ahahahah. (lol)”

Sixth Generation Head（；∀）: “Third! The trick! Please give me the

trick to a stable relationship!”

Third Generation Head (∀) : “... Earnestly devote your love to a single woman, perhaps? Well, you’re already too late, so no need to worry about that one (lolol).”

Sixth Generation Head (|| Д): “FUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUU”

Lyle Σ(∀ |||): “Eh? Me too!?”

Chapter 335: Prospects of Victory

... The remains of Centralle's palace.

There, before the undead that kept welling up, and the ape Agrissa had prepared, the First and Second fought. The soldiers they brought against fought on as well.

"Drop... dead already!!"

Giving his giant sword a grand arc, the First blew the monkey away, and cut it down. But no matter how many arms or legs it lost, it was a monster that would regrow it in an instant. From the mouth of its red

face, flames spewed as it rose up again and again.

The skeletal soldiers that kept sprouting from the floor were taken out one after the next by the Second's bow. Around the Second, his soldiers with bows in their hands fired arrow after arrow as well.

Meanwhile, the First's soldiers without any set formation or any proper orders, attacked and fought the skeletal men.

"This is just busy work. I can't see an end to it. And wait, dad... organize them a little why don't you? Don't have them fight divided like that."

As he leaned his sword against his shoulder, the First...

“Like I care! Charging and beating them down is the Walt House’s... eek! It’s the wifey!”

“Eh?”

To the First’s surprise, the Second turned to see the form of a heroic woman with a glaive against her shoulder. She looked at the two in irritation.

“... Line up, the lot of you!”

As the strong-built lass.... The First’s wife said that, the barbarian-ridden hoards of the First gathered together. More power came into the Second’s troops shooting through the skeletons as well.

Starting forward, the woman took a single sweep with her glaive... mowing down all the sleletal soldiers before her.

“Bring an end to that damn ape already. Isn’t that your only redeeming feature?”

The First watched her back as her gallant form brushed the bones away with splendor, silently giving a number of nods.

“Mom...”

As the Second gazed nostalgically at his mother’s back, from behind, a number of metallic rings... with diameters around that of a human’s skull... spun as they flew.

“Hey, you too!?”

As the Second turned and called out, a single woman appeared from a flash of blue light. A number of metal rings floated over the palm of her right hand, slowly spinning as they increased their speed, letting a low buzz reverberate through the surroundings.

“It looked interesting so here I am.”

Seeing the form of his wife trying to make herself look cute, the Second averted his eyes. She was young... her form in her early twenties, but they had a long past of husband and wife. He could only see it as her trying to make herself look younger.

“It’s a bit painful on the eyes.”

“What was that, honey?”

“... You look wonderful, dear.”

The woman led a small child behind her. The Second opened his eyes wide.

“Father!”

The child waving his hand was Dewey. The Second’s eldest son who was supposed to succeed the Walt House, and to the First, his first grandchild.

“Dew...”

“Dewey! Just you watch, your grandpa’s going to show you something real cool!”

Rather than the First generation’s delight, the Second with his reunion crushed was filled with anger he

had nowhere to direct. There, his wife tapped him on the back.

“You should just show him something cool too. See, just go and take care of that there monkey and those skeletons... and my mother-in-law already.”

The Second’s wife’s face was relatively serious. On the words of the bride aiming for her neck, the First’s wife blew away all the skeletons around her and turned.

“So the woman who can only pass water for soup thinks to stand against me!”

The Second’s wife moved herself behind Dewey.

“Kyah, your grandma’s bullying

mama, Dewey."

Her grandson used as a shield, a blue vein popped up on the First's wife's forehead. Everyone showed leisure. Because of the Jewel, they had all been granted the grace... the effect of its Skills.

"You bit..."

"Mommy, grandma... let's all get along."

"Yeah, your mama and grandma really should get along, shouldn't they?"

"... We're in front of my grandson. I'll let you off here, wench."

As Dewey directed straightforward eyes without any of the Third's

scheming at the two, they both started fawning over him.

The Second thought.

(Why did the Third turn out so dark anyways?)

... He thought.

And the First took a stance with his sword.

“My grandson’s watching. I’ve got to crush this ape and scatter all the small fries. I’m sure it’ll be fine if we leave up-top to Lyle.”

The Second muttered.

“This again? Well, we’re the ones who trained him. Let’s believe in him for now, and take care of our

own jobs."

The Second readied his silver bow as well. An extra-large arrow manifested across it. Multiple ones began to form. And around the Second as well, hundreds of arrows began to take shape.

The large sword the First held let off a blue light as it took on a shape like that of a dragon's head. While it maintained the shape of a sword, it looked exceedingly monstrous.

"... I'll take it out in one blow."

Hearing the First's words, the Second released his bow. All the arrows scattered around, sticking into the monkey-like monster and raising explosions. As the monster

faltered, and the surrounding skeletons were blown away, the First raced forwards.

“Here I go, dammit!!”

Down the path the Second had made, towards the faltering monster. Twas the back of the First the Second had aspired after so. The Second who took up the bow to protect the First smiled a little.

“Go get him dad.”

Swinging around his large blade to build up its force, he continued slicing into the monster’s flesh. And at the end, he unleashed a single, powerful blow into its head.

The slanted floor gave way, the monster sinking down within. That

powerful blow cut into the monster, blowing it apart... and returning it no more than chunks of flesh. Within the falling meat and blood, the First shouldered his sword.

“Alright, who’s next!”

As he said that and laughed, the surrounding barbarian soldiers raised their arms and raised cries of victory...

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“Just in case something like this happened... I furnished Porter to fly through the sky!”

The loading tray portion detached, leaving only its upper body. Detaching from what served as its spine, the Valkyries lifted it from its back to allow it to soar.

It clearly wasn't a construction meant to fly, but it was in the air regardless, so I'd keep quiet on that one.

Porter's head was moved to the side of its torso portion. For that sake, I could stand in its very center, Katana in hand as I looked at Agrissa.

At the enlarged Agrissa's chest... there, Novem limply hung her head. As she was absorbed, it seems she was gradually sinking in.

But I could still make it in time, so there was no need to panic. I was going to save Novem, so that left the biggest problem.

“How should I conduct a rescue that’ll remain in her heart. That’s the problem. Save her, hold her tight and kiss her is the golden combo, so how does that sound, Eva?”

Similarly riding Porter, Eva looked down as her body trembled. No good on water, and no good in the sky either. A hopeless elf… that was Eva.

“I-I don’t really care, just hurry up with it! We’re high! We’re higher up than I ever thought I would be, and it’s freaking me out!”

As she gripped onto a knob on Porter's exterior, Eva was exceptionally cute. Clara spoke from within.

"It doesn't matter. More importantly... i-it's cold. Really cold! Lyle-san, let's just end this quickly."

As she clattered and shook, Clara pleaded that I brought a swift end to it. The way she shook reminded me of a small animal, and that was cute too.

Nearby Porter, wearing a white dress, and spreading out her wings, Monica soared through the sky alongside us. To Porter's side, she dealt with attacks from Agrissa.

There were Valkyries around, and

Aria stood over Porter's left hand.

"Lyle, just get it over with already! Rather, you're sure you can win, right?"

Aria asked such a thing. I flipped my hair.

"Of course! I, Lyle Walt... am a man who won't fight without any prospects of victory. Prospects are important. By the way, I love to be praised too. So laud me whenever you want! My heart is always ready to accept it!"

Eva looked at me.

"How uncool!"

What's this!? So it's cooler to challenge an enemy with no chance

of victory? No, wait a second... I'm cool. And strong. Isn't that precisely why there are fewer battles where I won't come out on top?

... So the strong truly are lonely. I experienced that with my body and gave a bit of a sorrowful laugh.

"You sure are silly, Eva. To me, everything is a battle I can win. If I can't, I'll just make it so I can. That's the Walt house! That's why we're the strongest! And I believe I'm the greatest hero of that magnificent Walt House."

Aria covered her face.

"And you're the one who believes that. Yeah, yeah, just tell us about those prospects already."

As Agrissa directed her right hand at us, the Valkyries went up front and deployed their shields. While a large light approached, they were able to thrust it aside.

Agrissa chased after us, plunging into a cloud of gray. There was lightning racing around, raising a crackle, and at times after light raced across the earth and skies, the sound of thunder would ring out.

“Well, this looks far enough.”

Having pulled Agrissa away from Centralle, I signaled Clara to turn Porter towards her.

There, Agrissa stopped her game of chase, and floated up before us.

“So you stopped running away,

Lyle? What do you think will happen by pulling me away from Centralle?"

She showed a smile of leisure. Her pride pierced through to the end.

"Ah, as I thought, a kiss is best for a sleeping princess. Its effect's been worn down by the mainstream, but even so, I love those sorts of situations!"

Eva trembled.

"Y-your conversation isn't meshing, Lyle."

"Sorry. I can't help but wonder how I should save Novem so that she'll fall for me from the depths of her heart. This is no good. When she was always the one closest to me,

for me to be unable to hold onto her heart... well at times, it's good to have a woman who isn't too easy."

Everyone else was relatively easy, so I thought it was alright for there to be one with a higher difficulty level.

Aria threw the tool in her hand at me.

"Don't call me easy!"

As her face turned red, I consoled her.

"Don't be so angry. Strong and cool, rich... what's more, I hold the greatest authority on the continent, you know? Before my majesty, everyone's easy."

When I made a pose and declared it, Agrissa suddenly approached. Monica went up front and spread her wings, several hundred slender lights firing off from them to attack Agrissa.

“A defensive weapon... you even brought out something like that. You must be a protector of the grave on the moon.”

As Agrissa said such a thing, the beams only mildly singed her surface. She instantly healed up, while Monica let her blond twin tails sway in the wind.

“How terrible to treat me as second-hand goods. Even like this, I’m fresh off the line. I got these tools from my sisters.”

The automatons who constituted the Valkyries' cores once protected a gravesite on the moon. Whose grave was it?

"Hmm, having destroyed everything, Novem and Octo sure know how to act high and mighty. But you don't think that's enough to claim victory, do you?"

Agrissa spread out her arms, producing a number of lights. The orbs fired off from them were all masses of high-density magic.

I put my left hand in front of my face and snapped my fingers.

"It's true I might die out if it hit. So I just need to make it so it doesn't."

The lights fired off from Agrissa,

unlike Monica's, were thick clumps that came at us rapidly... but.

"Warp."

Before they could make contact, they were all sucked into space, and Agrissa hardened her guard.

"Are you mocking me...!"

From the airspace around Agrissa, the high-density magic she fired off came at her. As expected, they inflicted more damage than what Monica had shot.

I looked at Agrissa as I narrowed my eyes.

"... As I thought, pulling off all Skills at once is impossible, even for you. Since you said you could make

Skills, you put me on guard, but at best, you're the same as Celes, and the most you can do is change out the Skill you're using. While your output's in another dimension, there are plenty of ways to go about it."

Showing my leisure, I laughed as if to belittle her.

Perhaps I had hit the mark. Agrissa spoke up.

"And what of it? Don't think any of your attacks can defeat me. Even if I fall short of my days of prosperity..."

I held up the Katana. There, the surrounding lightning gathered around it.

“Are you forgetting something? I carry the blood of Septem as well. A feat like this is simple with the support of the Jewel. Clara, throw me.”

As I hopped onto Porter’s right hand, I was tossed straight at Agrissa. Controlling the surrounding lightning with my magic, I hammered that energy into her.

That was my plan!

“Yeah, so?”

She dodged quite easily. I was sent sprawling through the sky, and having lost my destination, all that was left was for me to go into freefall… or not! The reason being…

I'm damn strong!

"That's why I said you were naïve... Shuffle."

Switching places with the Valkyrie Agrissa drew near, I cut straight at her.

As expected, the energy of nature was vast. I severed the right arm she had put up to guard.

As she collected up her severed arm, she immediately stuck it back on, clenching and flexing out her hand.

I switched places with another Valkyrie letting Porter's right arm collect me.

"So did you feel that one?"

As I said that with one eye closed, a wrinkle graced Agrissa's brow as she laughed.

"Yeah, looks like you're not bad from time to time. So I'll get you back a few dozen, hundred times fold. And let me say this. Don't think that's nearly enough to..."

"Oh I don't. But don't think that's all you can expect from me. I mean, I'm a man who won't fight without a prospect of victory."

Porter continued on to toss Aria. And it threw me as well.

"Shuffle."

Exchanging places with Valkyries, Aria and I got our attacks in.

“Che! Little girl...”

Honestly, baiting her into attacking from the ground, and slamming whatever large-scale magic she fired back at her would be interesting, but she was on guard, so I doubt that was happening.

We could only plainly chip her away.

Me and Aria were reclaimed by Porter once more. Perhaps gradually getting used to it, Eva readied her bow and fired a shot.

“Select.”

The arrow she fired gained momentum in the air, circling around to Agrissa’s blind spot to attack her back.

“You flies sure know how to annoy with incessancy.”

As I looked at a relatively irritated Agrissa.

“... Should I let myself get beat up, and give her that, ‘I bore so much injury to see you safe again’ sort of feeling? I think I could pull off that wound-covered look quite well, you know?”

As I thought over how I would save Novem, I sought Aria’s thoughts on the matter. She looked at me.

“Why are you taking this so easy?”

Before Agrissa, to whom we’d yet to inflict any damage you could call Damage, it seems she couldn’t believe the leisure I exuded.

“I said it, didn’t I? I’m a man who won’t fight unless I’m certain of my victory. It’s because I can win, of course.”

I gathered lightning around my Katana, taking a stance to cut at Agrissa again. Agrissa glared at me.

“A mere human honestly believes...”

I stuck up the thumb of my left hand and pointed it at myself.

“Oh yes I do. I mean... I’m a man loved by the goddesses! The goddess of victory smiles down upon me!”

What should I do, I’m way too cool. I was scared at how amazing I was. I felt like I would fall for myself.

“You jest! You can’t stay on that

high horse forever!!”

Agrissa approached at a high velocity to crush us, and she swung her right arm. Her momentum, with the wind force alone, I could feel it was something incredible. I snapped my fingers.

“Sorry, but I don’t intent to take any attacks. I’ll be devoting myself to thoroughly avoiding... Warp.”

Porter and Monica, the Valkyries and all, I moved them from the spot, transporting them behind Agrissa as we continued to sprinkle her with petty attacks.

... All while I searched for her weakness.

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... As lightning rang out above.

At Lyle's main camp, Gracia and Elza of whom the Fifth had dragged back, had returned to their own camps and calmed down their troops.

As the army's main body recovered, morale was rapidly improving, so in response to that, their formations were recovering well.

Gracia and Elza rejoined the main force.

Receiving that report, General Blois plotted out his plan for recovery.

“If it’s now, we can still spring back. As long as we can surround wherever the dead are spawning...”

To his side was a single woman. Wearing a red dress around her body, she tapped the folded fan in her left hand as she sat in the seat prepared for her.

A pretty woman. But as she gave the gentlest of smiles, she looked upon the destruction of Centralle.

“It’s sorrowful to see the capital of old fall, but this is the land ruled by the accursed Bahnseim. And my grandson took Bahnseim down, raising up an empire for himself... there’s not a greater joy in the world. Don’t you think so, my kindred souls.”

Kindred souls... the knights and soldiers who once raised rebellion against Bahnseim. With the passage of the Sentras Kingdom that once existed before Bahnseim came to be, 【Zenoire】 was a descendent of Agrissa as well.

Such a woman sat in the main camp, watching the battle alongside her comrades of old.

At the time, they had risen up to overthrow the terrible state of the kingdom. While their numbers were never too great, their wills alone would shine through.

“Your grandson has grown up magnificently. It is my belief we should join his campaign.”
“The surrounding forces are already

pushing the dead back. I'm sure they're the heads of the Walt House."
"The preparations are in order."

Zenoire stood, spreading out her fan.

"So Celes resurrected that Yellow Jewel we've passed down for generations. But if Lyle is to use it to reign supreme over the continent, we've no choice but to aid his plight. The time has come for us to end the calamity Sentras left behind, and pass on the continent to its legitimate successors!"

The ones who watched the lines of armed men were Gracia and Elza. When they had returned to camp,

they opened their eyes wide at the commotion.

General Blois looked at the two.

“Madam, those two are Lyle-dono’s bridal candidates as well.”

She was making quite a ruckus, so General Blois had passed the problem onto Gracia and Elza. There, Zenoire turned, looking over the two as she narrowed her eyes.

“... Lyle’s wives? There are quite a few of you. Well, if he’s ascending to the crown, there won’t be a problem no matter how many there be. We’re launching attack, so accompany our charge.”

As Zenoire said such a thing, the two were quite perplexed. They had

returned to seek orders from the General. But General Blois kept his eyes averted.

“H-he sold us out!”

As Gracia said that, Zenoire folded up her fan, grasping the two girls’ heads and pulling them closer.

“Hurry it up! I don’t want to get in my son’s way! And we’ll be meeting up with Brod. For that man doesn’t know how to be tactful.”

Gracia and Elza squirmed as they were pulled off.

“Wait, she’s even stronger than me!”

“L-let me go!”

To the two wriggling ladies.

“If you come along, I’ll tell you all about Lyle. And I’ll check to see if you’re worthy of the Walt House.”

Zenoire said something quite like the Fourth’s wife. Perhaps it was something like a custom passed down through the women of the Walt House.

... And quite a terrible custom it was...

Chapter 336: The True One

... At the head of Cartaff's army's charge towards the dead was the form of the Fourth.

"Centralle stands right before us. Now then, I can't let my wife do all the work. When I've gotten my hands on weapons like these, I've at least got to try them out."

Holding a dagger in each hand, at his back, with their blades pointed out, the extra daggers moved to trace a circle. As the Fourth lightly tossed the daggers in his hands upwards, he reaffirmed his grasp on the timing they took to fall.

“Full Drive...”

He muttered.

His form disappeared from the spot, and in the next instant, the army of the dead began to fall, be cut up, pierced, blown away one by one. Multiple daggers were pierced into the heads of the fallen.

With a path presumably made by the Fourth formed in an instant, his army and the legions of Cartaffs entered formation to tread down it in their march.

The Fourth’s wife.

“Hey, give an order already.”

“I-I know. Forward March!”

Urged on, Ludmilla launched her army of over a hundred thousand down the path the Fourth had carved out. The ones stationed at the very front lines were the Fourth's army.

Avoiding a swipe from a skeletal soldier, the Fourth used the minimum necessary movements to cut them down one after the next.

His movements were truly light.

The Fourth's wife watched his movements as she held up her right hand, and snapped her fingers. In a space a ways away from the Fourth, two magic circles appeared in the sky, raining fire magic down.

"Look, we're closing in on Centralle.

You'll set up an encampment, won't you? Get to it!"

Standing to Ludmilla's side, the Fourth's wife gave out orders. Ludmilla wasn't accustomed to this set up, and she couldn't help but hate the feeling she was being watched and tested.

"I know!"

"Don't talk back! Do you think you can become a Walt House woman like that?"

On the manifestation of her nagging mother-in-law, Ludmilla was irritated. But on top of the woman boasting true ability, this wasn't the place to squabble.

On top of understanding all that,

the Fourth's wife continued her petty nagging, enjoying it in her own way.

"Even so, as expected of Max. He really is reliable."

On the front-most line, cutting down one undead after the next, at times he would disappear, and the surrounding enemies were blown away. The Fourth's wife gave her impression upon seeing him in battle...

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... Lyle's main camp. In a place stationed to the side, the former

Bahnseimian officials who were only there to gain the ‘fact they were there,’ held weapons in their hands as they fought skeletal soldiers.

But without even trying to reach past the stockades, they were ready to flee at any moment.

They had gripped swords in their lives, and at least had the fundamentals down. But their bodies had slackened with their long years spent at the desk, and working only under threats, they weren’t quite up to form.

Milleia looked over them, breathing out a sigh.

“Hah... they really are useless.”

As she discharged the guns in her hands, the bullets pierced through the enemy's weak points... cleanly blowing their heads away.

To Milleia who could tell what part was weakest, such a task was no trouble at all. While she had left the stockades and found herself surrounded by foes, she continued defeating them one after the next.

Throwing down her fired gun, she cut apart the enemy that came close with the bayonet attached to its barrel. She was wearing a dress, and her skirt lightly floated with her. It was almost as if she was dancing.

At times she would kick the skeletons in their skulls.

“I wonder how I can make them work harder.”

As she said that, she sent a glance to her grandson Ralph on the inner side of the stockades. But while Ralph did hold a weapon, he was only a little more decent than the others.

Even if he was strong over a desk and at meeting, at laying the groundwork, you couldn’t call him proficient in direct combat.

And At that moment, Miranda and Shannon, who’d been receiving healing behind the stockades came out.

“Sorry to keep you waiting. We’re ready anytime.”

“Anytime!”

Riding the feral cat-shaped golem Miranda produced, Shannon also straightened her back as she called out to Milleia.

Milleia smiled as she blew away the head of an enemy soldier with her gun. The bullet went through, and pierced through the head of a second one behind it.

“Oh, you could rest a while more, you know? But it seems you’re motivated, and that’s a delight... while you’re at it, why don’t you get a good look at the abilities of the ones who tried to use you?”

Milleia glared around. Miranda looked at Ralph and the others.

A heroine like Milleia had married into the Circry House, and Miranda carried on her blood. Shannon carried down her demon eyes.

The ones who inherited her blood most strongly was definitely those two. Miranda produced threads from both her hands. Those strings made with her Mana wove around one another as they wrapped the golem Shannon rode.

“Wire Frame.”

As Miranda muttered that, the golem gradually grew in size. As it took on the form of an armored warrior with the head of a lion, Miranda hopped onto its shoulder. Its degree of perfection was even higher than the golem she had used

when she fought against Novem.

The wires she produced created a framework, and by passing them through the dirt, its movements had become smoother. What's more, it allowed her to make it even larger.

It was a form she could only complete with Shannon's support on reading the finer flow of Mana. Shannon was properly helping out as well.

As the manufactured golem let out a roar, arms sprung out from its back. Various weapons were held by the arms it grew from tis back.

"Oh, how wonderful. Looks like you know what it takes to be a Walt Woman. You have to at least be

able to do this much."

Milleia- who said it as if it was a matter of fact- hopped onto the beastly warrior as well. 'It's nice to see the scenery from above,' or so she said, but to the demon eye holder Milleia, there was no way she should be able to see the actual scenery.

As Miranda was about to open her mouth.

"Yes I can see. I mean, I'm receiving the support of the Jewel. Yep, it's quite a fresh feeling. Well, the sight of Centralle, the city I lived for so many years, falling to ruin is... oh my, I'm not actually sad at all."

While she looked a tad sorrowful at

the start, even when looking over the ruins of Centralle, Milleia seemed fine. More than that.

“Now trample it down. Full speed ahead!”

As she watched Milleia enjoying herself, Shannon spoke.

“... The Walt House is crazy.”

Miranda seemed to share her opinion. Looking down on the battlefield of magic and Skill bombardments, she nodded.

“That’s right. They’re much stronger than any of us. No wonder Novem was lost for words. Well... it seems they’re going to help Lyle out, so we should do our part as well. If we quit while we’re ahead,

we'll never achieve victory."

If they fell here, Lyle would carry a wound for the rest of his life, and Novem would come out the victor, harem-wise. Miranda was wary of it.

"We've got to properly settle things."

To Miranda as she said that with a straight face, Milleia seemed exhilarated.

"Very nice, Miranda. You've the makings of a Walt in you yet!"

Shannon looked at their father, watching them from the ground. He had his mouth open with a blank expression on his face.

“... As I thought, that’s the normal reaction. The Walt House is strange. I’m getting the feeling it’s definitely impossible for me.”

To Shannon, Milleia.

“Don’t fret! Everyone says that, but they get used to it in no time!”

She received some information she wasn’t very happy to hear...

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Confirming some flashy battle was breaking out on the ground, I cut at Agrissa.

While I was definitely inflicting damage, it was lacking in anything decisive.

Novem was being sucked into Agrissa, and her head was still exposed outside, but therein lay the problem. That was definitely her weak point, but she was covering it with Novem.

That was plainly malicious. This woman definitely has a terrible personality.

“Agrissa, you... have a terrible personality.”

As I said that, Eva cried out as she clung to Porter.

“You finally realized it!? Of course it’s going to be terrible!”

As I shuffled to change my position with the Valkyries, I appeared right above Porter, and made my landing.

“You can’t judge a book by its cover. Maybe, just maybe... at a considerably low probability, I thought perhaps she was actually a great person deep down. Though I treasure Novem more, so whether she be good or not, I’d cut her down.”

As I said that, Aria appeared over Porter’s left hand, out of breath.

“Y-you... cut it out already. While we’ve wounded her, I don’t have the slightest feeling we can win.”

Agrissa’s wounds instantly regenerated. She directed both her

hands towards us, manifesting over a few thousand balls of light. They were all masses of high-density Mana.

“You incessant flies, I’ll end you with this.”

One of Agrissa’s eyes was open a little wider than the other, a blue vein beginning to surface on her forehead.

“Apparently you develop wrinkles easier when you’re angry.”

When I gave her an honest warning, Agrissa grew even angrier.

“If you think you can handle this many, then just try it! ... And regret that last remark you directed at me!”

The few thousand lights coming at us. Sure enough, this wasn't a blind spot I could warp us into.

"Then I'll just swap out with you... Shuffle."

"What!?"

Agrissa took on the few thousand attacks she made herself. As I thought, she protected her chest portion where Novem lay. Attacks continued to rain down on her, enveloping her in explosions and smoke.

I was a little relieved.

"So it's there after all. That's good. If it was her lower parts or rear, I thought it wouldn't make for the right picturesque scene. Really, if

that was her weak point, I'd have been troubled. I'd have no choice but to send Aria to attack."

"I wouldn't want to either!"

As a man, it would make me look indecent. If Aria did it, I thought it would barely stay in the safe zone, but she seemed extremely reluctant.

"There's no helping it. Then if it came to it, I'd..."

Clara let out a relatively serious voice.

"Please stray from that topic, Lyle-san!"

She said, so I could only close my mouth. Well, if I was the one doing it, no matter how obscene it was,

I'm sure it would transcend to the realm of fine art, so it would work out.

More than that, am I not already fine art myself? Even if I exposed my bare form, the perfect work of art that wouldn't be seen in indecent eyes. Right, if I'm living, breathing art, then...

"Come back! Get out of the land of delusions and come back to us, Lyle!"

Hearing Aria's voice, I stopped the train of thought.

"Alright, when I found my empire, I'll adorn my capital with bronze statues of my naked form. I'm sure it'll be spectacular! Ahahaha..."

As I raised a grand laugh, I heard an ominous voice. It was Agrissa.

She had been wrapped in explosions, and once the smoke had cleared, she looked as pitiful as I'd expected. There were even portions I could see the bone through her flesh.

"... Lyyyleee...."

A deep wrinkle was carved into her forehead, as her body instantly repaired. As I thought, she was firing attacks she knew she could survive herself.

How ill-natured.

I sighed.

"Hah, good grief... looks like I've no

choice but to use my trump card."

"Trump card, or whatever, just do something quickly! It's cold! Really cold!"

I couldn't' tell if Eva was shaking from her fear of heights or the cold. I looked over at Novem.

Her head hung limp, and everything below her collarbone had been taken into Agrissa.

"Well, what we're doing in simple. I mean, waking the sleeping beauty is always the job of the prince on his white horse. Well, I'm a future emperor, so there's a subtle difference there."

I'm not a price or an imperial prince. But since my very existence

is special, there shouldn't be a problem. I mean I think I'm a much rarer find than any prince or imperial. An eventual emperor... what a premium ring it does hold.

"The premium sense of being future emperor is nothing to scoff at."

As I said that, Monica floating next to Porter.

"... Premium, is it? That could also just mean an additional fee, but as expected of our damn chicken."

"Right, my very existence is special, and a title like emperor is nothing more than an added bonus! That's how it is, so I'll be off to wake my sleeping princess... rather, my sleeping lover."

“... Just do whatever you want.”

I could hear Clara’s fed-up voice. I’m sure she was jealous. I’ll follow up with her later. I’m a man who never forgets to follow through.

But my Skill that connected us with a deep kiss...

As I thought, I’m a man who’s got it. As a chosen one, I’m different after all.

As I thought that, I kicked off Porter, and soared through the air, extending a hand to Monica. Monica grasped my hand, and set off right for Novem.

“I wanted a monopoly on the sleeping princess trope. It was my first precious memory.”

To Monica's complaints, Agrissa turned both her hands, in an attempt to launch an attack. I laughed.

"It's the most effective method. I'll link with Novem, and call back her consciousness."

"Oh, so you've actually thought this through. I was sure you just wanted the kiss."

Naturally, it's a conclusion I came to considering both points.

Agrissa shot off a few balls of magic, and we proceeded through them. Monica dodged, and when she couldn't, she'd spread her wings, firing off beams to shoot them down.

With all her sudden movements, Monica carried me as she soared. Rises and nose-dives, even spins thrown in, it was truly a blast.

“Lowly automaton!!”

Seeing through Agrissa’s irritation, I plainly warped some of her own attacks to hit her. The Valkyries were also peppering her with blasts, and I’m sure her annoyance was rising to a peak.

I laughed.

“Hey, what’s wrong? I’m over here... Agrissa-chan.”

When I teased her, perhaps she had finally reached the end of her patience, as horn-like things protruded out from all over her

body.

“That’s enough! Not even dust shall remain... dissapear!”

As a giant mass of mana manifested, she fired it towards us. It size was enough to swallow me, Monica, and even Porter and the Valkyries behind us. On that attack fired off towards the sky, we were swallowed whole.

“When you’re away from your comrades, you can’t use your Warp so freely...”

From the airspace above Agrissa, I had Monica release me so I could approach.

“Real sorry. That over there’s an illusion. When you’re the one who

made Skills, you still fell for that one? How cute, Agrissa-chan."

I continued to fall, coming before Agrissa's eyes. As I saw my form reflected in her massive pupils, I swung my Katana in a horizontal line. A line of red ran across them as I cut her eyes through, blood and a muddy substance spurting out.

Agrissa covered her face with both hands.

"AAaaaAAAAaAAAAaArrgGGH!!"

As she writhed in pain, I made a landing near Novem, extending a hand to her chin. Lifting up her face, I put her in a position easy to kiss, and went right on to lock our lips. It was the moment I line was

formed between us.

“... Novem, you’re...”

Novem slowly opened her eyes. Her violet irises gave off a faint light. And as she looked at me, she smiled.

“As expected of Lyle-sama. To corner Agrissa... Septem so far. You really are the gentleman I thought you were.”

It was a gentle voice.

But through the line that connected us, I swallowed my breath at the information that flowed in.

“Monica!”

“Roger!”

As I leapt away from Novem, I landed on Monica's back in midair. Right after, Novem who'd opened her eyes, slowly took a deep breath.

Eva clinging to Porter turned to me.

"Hey! Why didn't you save her!?"

I issued orders to Clara.

"Clara, use Porter's arms! Aria and Eva, let the Valkyries carry you!!"

The Valkyries grabbed Eva and Aria, removing them from Porter, while Porter extended its two large arms towards Agrissa.

While Agrissa covered her eyes, Novem took a deep breath.

"How long did you intent to play

around? Flustered by something so insignificant... this is why you guys were no good."

As novem narrowed her eyes, Agrissa suddenly moved.

"M-my body is..."

Porter's extended hand grabbed onto Agrissa's arm. And with her contained, I cried out to Clara.

"Do it!"

Clara used the weapons furnished on Porter's two arms. Those arms detaching from the main body, the Valkyries pulled the torso portion back.

Novem looked over the scene and laughed.

“You’ve stuffed a lot of things into it. Whenever you fiddled around with Porter, you always seemed to be having such fun, and it was fun for me to watch. How pleasant.”

Novem smiled...

In the next instant, Porter fired the stakes furnished in its arms. The gunpowder stuffed inside them ignited, blowing Agrissa’s arms off.

Agrissa tried to open her mouth to scream, but from her body, a mask-like protrusion came out to seal up her mouth.

As Agrissa squirmed, Novem slowly raised out her buried body as if getting out of a bath, exposing her naked form as she stood. Her hand

was clasped around a magic tool.

As Agrissa wriggled in pain at the loss of her arms, Novem stabbed her staff Magic Tool into her body.

Aria looked upon the scene.

“What’s this, could it be Novem got captured because she could...”

I turned to Aria and everyone around.

“That’s not it. Novem... purposely got caught by Agrissa. From the start, she planned to end Agrissa at the cost of herself.”

She planned to open her eyes and restrain Agrissa for us. And under our concentrated fire, they would disappear together.

By doing so, Novem thought... that I would grow stronger. Not in power. By overcoming her death, my psych would strengthen... and that would lead me down the path to become a splendid emperor.

"... Since she couldn't win through Agrissa, Novem changed her objective."

Her hair tie removed, her long hair was released to flow in the wind. Novem responded to my words.

"Yes. You went beyond my imagination. Lyle-sama, you're always like that. You always betray my expectations. And that was always delightful. Unlike the weak who discarded their bodies and fled to their dreams. As a true human,

worthy to rule this earth. My plan has... at this moment, been completed. My only regret is that I won't be able to watch over you for times to come."

Letting go of the staff stabbed into Agrissa, Novem locked her hands in front of her chest. It looked almost as if she was praying.

"Ah, how wonderful. Octō, my plan was a success. I even managed to bring an end to the traitor Septem... Nihil, Ūnus, Duo, Trēs, Quattuor, Quīnque, Sex... I gathered all the seven goddess' descendants under Lyle-sama. Lyle-sama, you are worthy to be the ruler of this planet. All that's left is for me to personally ascertain your ability. It's alright... I'll hold back. However, I won't stop

until you bring about my death. By killing me, Lyle-sama will finally be completed."

Novem's eyes... were serious. They were corrupt beyond reason. Dammit! Why does it have to be at a time like this.

Aria and the others looked at my mortified face.

"Lyle, to think Novem was..."

"What? Oh right, she was saying something. Honestly, I don't care about the contents. Because I love Novem too. I'm prepared to accept her. While she's a bit out there, she's always welcome! Well, you see the problem is..."

It was my own problem.

That was...

"... It seems time's up. I wanted to convey my love some more, but our time has run out."

Aria and the others tilted their heads. And Clara.

"You mean the effective use time of your Skill..."

"No. That ones's still fine... you see, my tension's kinda dropping over here. To be honest, I'm finding it hard to believe we were able to stand our own against Agrissa to such an extent. Could it be I'm actually something amazing?"

A sensation as if I was rapidly cooling down, I could gradually feel my face heat up. Looking back on

my current self with a level head, I was beginning to feel embarrassed.

“... It’s no good. I want to forget it all. Thank the goddess we’re up so high. If it was on the ground, there’s no way I could look the others in the eyes... Aaah!! Dammittt!!”

I remembered. I ended up remembering.

I... was still connected to everyone through line.

As well as everyone I’d called forth... right, with the ancestors as well.

Chapter 337: Evil God or Goddess

At the giant Agrissa, Novem stabbed in her heirloom staff.

Naked, she undid her trademark side-ponytail, letting her long hair sway in the wind. Her light-brown hair looked as if it was sparkling. Her violet eyes also looked as if they were letting off a glow, but that one probably wasn't a trick of the light.

Her arms blown away, Agrissa was failing to regenerate. Her mouth was sealed, and she was unable to say anything.

She could only squirm, so... Novem

looked down on her in annoyance. She twisted her staff.

“Silence. We’re talking about important things here.”

Agrissa’s body twitched. A silver metal spread from the tip of the staff, destroying her body from the inside.

As she slowly fell, Agrissa couldn’t move either. Novem stroked her hair to tuck it behind her ear, turning back to me.

“... Evil gods and goddesses, they were all originally the same. Of course, now this thing right here is a sham.”

As she wrote off Agrissa as a sham, Novem was smiling.

I got my breathing in order, lowering Porter to match her descent as I asked her. I had to ask.

“Novem... what do you mean I’ll be completed by defeating you?”

Novem laughed. She looked over at me.

“As I thought, you’re more suited to be like that. I liked your post-Growth as well, but your original state is full of good parts too.”

“Answer me!”

Novem looked down a bit, instantly raising her face. She made a serious expression.

“That is the will of Novem. All Novem ever desired was strong

humans. And Lyle-sama, you are an existence worthy of the role. Now that I've confirmed that... my, and my clan's role is over."

Novem's will surely meant the will of the evil god. And her clan was the Forxuz House.

"So you're arbitrarily dragging your house down with you?"

"Of course not. I'm sure the ones apart from me will find their own ways to live from here on. But with my own death in mind, I want to complete you. By discarding your fixation on me, and cutting me off... show me the strength to fulfill your objectives even if you must discard what's close to you."

I couldn't understand what Novem was saying. No, I could comprehend the contents.

She wanted me to kill her. And by doing that, she said I would grow stronger...

Was that really the case?

Aria carried by the Valkyries shouted at Novem.

"Do you enjoy carving wounds into Lyle's heart like that!? You'd better give it a rest! Always, always... making a face as if you understood it all, it's because you never said anything that everyone hated you!"

Novem looked at Aria. But her expression was different from when she looked at me. As if she was

completely indifferent.

“Does being hated by you humans afford me any demerit? To me, what’s important is Lyle-sama, and you humans are existences to birth Lyle-sama’s children. It was quite a trial to find you, but I’m sure a replacement could be found from here on.”

Aria was lost for words. It wasn’t a line I could imagine coming from the Novem who’d accompanied us to now. I mean, Aria was one who’d been with us the longest. I’d seen her getting along with Novem time and again. Yet to her, Novem spoke disinterestedly.

I turned to Novem.

“Is that really how you were thinking of them!? Hey, Novem!”

“If you put together my statements, it shouldn’t be strange for me to think like that.”

She directed a smile at me.

Eva to Novem.

“Why... I mean, you were so kind!”

“Because doing so had merit to me. If that wasn’t the case, I wouldn’t be kind. All my kindness is for Lyle-sama. Don’t misunderstand.”

Clara wrenched open the door on Porter’s chest and stuck out her head. The strong wind put her hair in a disarray.

“Novem-san, what you’re trying to do is mistaken! You want Lyle-san to shoulder such a burden!? When you thought of Lyle-san so...”

Novem touched a hand to her chest.

“If it’s Lyle-sama, he will be able to overcome my death. My worry is unnecessary.”

On the contrary, I wanted to ask why she was evaluating me like that... I don’t think I’m that amazing myself. If I was mentally stronger, I think I could’ve gone about this much more skillfully.

Monica carrying me spotted the ground below, and slowed the speed of our descent.

“I hate you after all.”

Novem looked at Monica.

“And I hate you too. You’re a machine to bring depravity to humanity. But you’re also a tool necessary for Lyle-sama who’s to be an emperor. So I placed you by his side.”

The goddesses starting at Nihil and ending at Novem. It seemed as if Novem didn’t have the sense of values of a human.

Carrying on memory, and carrying on power, like that, she had looked over us for so many years. Perhaps it would be stranger if she didn’t go mad.

But even so...

“I don’t want that. I can’t kill you!”

There, Novem made a troubled face. As she touched her staff to Agrissa's body that lay limp on the ground, the silver blades that stuck out shredded the body to pieces. Agrissa faded away.

As Novem landed on the ground, a red light manifested to cloak her body. Almost like a dress... like armor... coated in such a thing, Novem changed her staff to its scythe form and looked at me.

She reached her left hand to her side.

"There's no helping it. For you are kind. But that kindness... might prove fatal."

Where she directed her left hand

with a smile, space split and burst. From there, Shannon's form was reflected.

"Shannon!"

"Eh!?"

I could hear Shannon's voice as she noticed the rift in space. And Novem gave a grin.

"Speaking to the Walt House's precepts, Shannon's base state is disqualified. If I were to kill anyone, she would have to be the first... Lyle-sama, if you don't kill me, the girls will die."

From her left hand, a light of magic gathered, forming a high-density mass. That one was bad. I could tell just from looking. It was worse than

Agrissa's.

"S-stop..."

"See, it's because you hesitated that someone had to die."

She shot the magic into the rift of space. That high purity, high-density orb of Mana fired off, the special rift disappeared.

I hurriedly tried to use a Skill, but Novem held up her staff.

"The ability I stole from Septem really is a useful one. But it seems Agrissa was unable to pull it off. Good grief, she really was a useless incompetent."

From the large scythe of a staff, I felt a powerful interference.

“My Skills are...”

... I couldn’t use them. As I imagined the worst possible scenario, I heard a voice. Milleia’s voice.

『... And what do you think you’re doing to my cute Shannon?』

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... The ones on the shoulder of the giant beastly warrior golem were Miranda and Shannon. As well as Milleia.

As Agrissa fell near the palace, seeing her disappear, there were

cries of joy being raised below.

On top of that, the form of the golem trampling skeletal soldiers and mowing them down gave their allies some courage. Miranda put out strings from both hands to manipulate the golem.

“There are too many of them. And even when Agrissa disappeared, these guys don’t go away?”

Shannon held up her right fist.

“Go! Onwards, my steed!”!

The golem that continued plowing down everything in its path had put her in a good mood. Milleia looked upon the scene, as she shot down the skeletons attempting to climb up the golem’s legs.

“You can’t let your guard down. Our foe doesn’t feel any pain, after all. These dead men who know no fear, they really are troublesome.”

She produced guns from her sleeves one after the next as she fired through the enemies. There, she suddenly heard Lyle’s voice from the sky.

“Shannon!”

“Eh!?”

As Shannon raised her face, she found a hole where space had been ripped away. On the other side of the hole, Novem was wearing a dress as she fired off magic. What’s more, it was directed at Shannon.

Miranda instantly set the entire

golem on a path to evade, but the fired magic gave chase.

The magic that came flying straight at Shannon...

Milleia kicked it away. As she kicked it down in her dress, she landed right back on the beastly warrior.

The magic that fell on the ground exploded, blowing away hordes of skeletal soldiers. And it even formed quite a crater.

"... And what do you think you're doing to my cute Shannon? Novem-chan, you've gone a bit past the realm of mischief there."

From the rift in space, she could see Novem's laughing face. She was

laughing as she looked at Milleia. As the space gradually closed away, Novem looked at her.

“Oh my, it seems I’ve failed. But if you’re there, then there’s no helping it. I’ll aim for someone else. And by doing so, Lyle-sama will open his ey–”

Space closing up before she could finish, Shannon and Miranda were left dumbfounded.

“Why was Novem...”

“Hey, what’s going on? Connection’s been useless for a while now... there’s noise in the line.”

When they should have been connected, there was static mixed

in, and they couldn't make contact. Milleia looked at the sky, gripping her guns as she shot through the climbing skeletons below her.

"... Both of you, we're heading for Centralle. It looks like that child is in need of some harsh discipline. Well, I'm sure it will be difficult for me alone, but... we've got the whole family."

Shannon trembled with a pale expression as she looked at Milleia's angry face...

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... The First Generation Head had

seen Novem attack Shannon as well.

The First and Second were unable to hide their surprise as they looked upon the scene. But the ones to blast them away were their wives. The First's wife hit him on the head.

"Don't just stand there surprised, do something about that kid!"

"N-no, I mean! Novem-chan's a daughter of the Forxuz House! Descendent of the old man. And she's a gallant girl who sold off her dowry!"

In place of the First's incoherent ramblings, the Second offered them an explanation.

“Please wait. She’s a good girl. A really good girl. But right now, I’m sure there are just some extraneous circumstances.”

The Second’s wife tilted her head.

“And because of whatever circumstances, you’ll overlook a murder attempt? Honestly, I couldn’t care less about whatever circumstance that girl has. From our point of view, we can’t accept if Lyle’s killed, or his wives die. Just why do you think we’ve been trying so hard to begin with?”

The First was surrounded by his own soldiers. The surroundings were awaiting his verdict. But they did have an agreement on one thing.

"... That girl's definitely a Walt House bride, isn't she."
"I know, right?"
"I'm getting the same feeling from when the boss married in."

As they ran their mouths, the First's wife gave a stern glare at the soldiers.

"Who are you comparing to that crazy wench!? Look me in the eyes and say it!"

Everyone took a step back, raising an, 'Eek!' The first quietly muttered, 'that's exactly what they're talking about,' to himself.

But the Second turned to the two.

"A-anyways! We recognize that girl!"

There, arriving on the spot, the Fifth and Sixth approached the First and the others.

“So we’re first to arrive. And Novem’s gone on a rampage. Well, I knew it would come to this.”

“Exactly. She always had those suspicious parts to her.”

The First looked at the two of them, pointing his giant sword.

“What’s with you lot!? You’ve got some complaints with Novem-chan!?”

The Fifth put his galient blade against his shoulder.

“I’m on team Aria.”

There, the First and Second looked surprised.

“Eh? Really? Why’s that?”

“What exactly happened while we were away?”

The Sixth looked at Novem and Lyle.

“But I’m pushing for Miranda and Shannon.”

There, with an invisible sword in hand, and the Bahnseim royal line apprehended behind him, the Third met up with them. He looked at Lyle in a care-free manner as he laughed.

“So the final one to stand before Lyle is Novem-chan, eh? Well I saw

it coming. Ah, but the way, I'm supporting Clara-chan. Rather, why isn't Max here yet?"

Everyone's eyes gathered on the Third as he looked around restlessly. While the First had much he wanted to ask, he put that aside.

"Do I have your attention!? Anyways, Novem-chan is important! There's no way things'll end well if they play out like this! We have to do something to stop them!"

As he said that for all to hear, the Third made a blatantly reluctant expression.

"And wait, isn't this a problem between them? I think it'll just be

dubious if we lend a hand. Right, let's just leave this to Lyle, and..."

"Sleigh!"

As Dewey called out, the Third released his invisible sword from his hand. As its tip pierced into the ground, the Third looked in that direction.

"Bro...ther...?"

Even if he knew he'd be there, to the Third, his brother was a special existence to him. He couldn't keep up his usual aloof air.

"Let's help them. This is definitely a mistake. I know I'm young, and there are a lot of things I don't know... but still, this looks like a mistake. I can't do anything, but... I

know I can't do anything, but if it's Sleigh, can't you help them out?"

On his older brother Dewey's words, the Third averted his eyes. His debt and the past he didn't want to remember materialized in his brother's very existence.

The Fifth looked over at Lyle and Novem.

"I do think there's something off with barging into the romantic affairs of others. If Lyle can't resolve it, there's no meaning in us bringing about a temporary resolution. I think this one's Lyle's problem."

Dewey looked down. There, a grudge-filled voice called out from

behind him. It was the Sixth's wife.

"So that's how father-in-law pretended not to see our strife... you've hurt me."

"Eek!"

The Sixth took a few steps back. While she was a beautiful woman, the atmosphere around her was truly dark. And it looked as if she was shouldering a strange aura.

The Fifth made a cramped face.

"And I'm telling you if the individuals don't resolve it themselves..."

This time, the Fifth's wife and mistresses showed themselves.

“No, you’re misunderstanding something, dear. That’s not a lover’s quarrel over there.”

“Eh?”

“... Accursed mother-in-law. Is it not because you permitted mistresses that Lyle turned out so indiscriminate? How truly irritating.”

The Fifth’s wife’s sharp glare pierced into the Sixth’s. As all eyes gathered on the Sixth, the Sixth silently averted his eyes.

The First’s wife spoke up.

“If it’s not a lover’s tiff, then what is it?”

The Fifth’s wife corrected her

posture. And putting a hand to her chest, she said it clearly.

“They’re already family, are they not!? They’ve kissed and fought alongside one another as a couple! While they’ve yet to layer bodies, it’s clear they already have a relationship exceeding lovers! This is a problem of the whole house! So we shall intervene.”

The Fifth frantically cut in to interrupt.

“Yeah, could you stand down a while longer? Your interventions are no laughing matter! Why don’t we just trust in Lyle a bit more!”

Isolated from the rowdy surroundings, Lyle had begun to

move...

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“It’s getting noisy around. But even so... Sevens, was it? That’s a good Skill. A Skill to call back the House Heads of times past, and the people who lived alongside them. I’m surprised you’ve become able to use the Jewel to such a level, Lyle-sama.”

To this point, Novem had always affirmed me. And that Novem was now telling me to kill her. Otherwise she’s kill the others.

When she aimed for Shannon I

panicked, but it's a saving grace that Milleia-san was alongside her.

... Wait, was that really the case?

"Novem, why did you..."

"Yeah, could you stand down a while longer? Your interventions are no laughing matter! Why don't we just trust in Lyle a bit more!"

I heard the Fifth cry out. The outfield had been growing louder for a while now, and I couldn't maintain my sense of tension.

As I looked at Novem, perhaps she thought the same as she put a hand to her chin and nodded.

"Everyone, I'm sure the undead made by Agrissa were insufficient

to keep you company. Naturally. You're a clan I recognized after all."

In delight, Novem stabbed her staff into the ground. From there, a magic circle formed, and a dragon manifested.

With its golden scales, a giant dragon whose splendid red horns seemed to pierce into the sky had manifested behind her.

Novem touched the dragon's skin, closing her eyes.

"Those are people worthy to take you on. So keep them company. I care not if you kill them. In the end... they're only memories."

On those words, I stepped in. I cut at her with my Katana. Yet there, it

turned out that even with the sword I held in both hands, her one-handed staff overpowered me.

“So you’ve finally grown serious, Lyle-sama. But that’s not nearly enough. Right! Whether this child... this【Legend Dragon】burns everything down first, or you kill me first, let’s make it a contest. For this child is strong.”

Hearing Legend Dragon, I sought confirmation with Clara. The noise was terrible, but she was near enough that conversation was possible.

“I don’t know it. Such a dragon... I’ve never even heard of it before.”

Clara replied instantly. Novem

smiled and nodded as if it were only natural.

“It’s a boss of a floor humanity has never once managed to reach in their brief existence. A guardian, floor boss, call it what you will. Beyond the hundredth floor of the Labyrinth... it’s one of the strongest monsters guarding the innermost chamber. Well, there are other troublesome monsters as well.”

As the golden dragon turned to the heavens and let out a roar, that was enough to blow us back. Novem stroked its face, the Legend Dragon spread its large wings and took to the sky.

As she smiled, Novem took her scythe in both hands.

“Now come, Lyle-sama. No... my beloved child. Show your mother your strength.”

I gripped my Katana and gritted my teeth.

“My mother’s name is Claire Walt! You’re no mother of mine!”

Novem spoke.

“No, you’re wrong... for to me, all of humanity is akin to my children.”

Chapter 338: Can I Cry

As I swung the Katana in my hands, Novem caught it as she spun her scythe.

Following through with its large, spinning motions, she turned its blade towards me and lowered it. Its speed was even greater than before, and I couldn't dodge it so easily.

Novem approached. As I parried her attack with my katana, the golden dragon took to the sky. It headed for the place the ancestors stood.

As Novem purposely brought this

to a competition, she closed in on my face.

“Now hurry up and defeat me. By your own hand, Lyle...”

Her calling me without a –sama was quite a fresh feeling. But now wasn’t the time to think about such things.

From behind, Aria cried out.

“Novem, give it a rest already...”

As Novem’s eyes narrowed, a monster appeared at Aria’s feet. While it looked as if a land dragon had surfaced, its scales held a golden glint.

I could see the blurry, staticky image through Aria’s field of vision.

That something that looked like a land dragon emerged from the earth to stand before Aria.

“What did you call out this time!?”

When I forcefully separated myself, Novem purposefully leapt back. I could only feel as if I was being played with.

“It’s a sub-species of Land Dragon. It wouldn’t be any fun to call out a normal monster when we have a Labyrinth’s boss among us. She doesn’t have a part in this, so I got something to pull her away. It’s strong. Aria may lose and die.”

Aria took a stance with her spear, confronting the Land Dragon. Eva, Clara, Monica and the Valkyries

went in to support her as well.

Monica looked over the whole field, offering me support as well. As lines of light came down on Novem, she simply took them with a calm look on her face. The parts that were hit let off a red light.

She was putting up a partial Magic Shield.

“Che! Damn vixen!”

Novem looked at Monica in the sky.

“.. Do you have the leisure to pay mind to us? I don’t think Aria and the others are enough to triumph over that child.”

It was just as Novem said. The non-magic-centric Aria was mismatched

to deal with a beast that boasted metallic scales.

While she swung her spear, its blade wouldn't reach. Eva supported, but she looked to be at a disadvantage. And while Clara was specialized at support, offensive magic was her weak suit.

Monica narrowed her eyes before going off to aid Aria.

Novem smiled.

"Now with that, the hindrances have gone away. It's just the two of us."

"You should save a line like that for someplace with a better ambiance."

That was the best comeback I could

come up with. As I cut forward, she dodged by a paper-thin margin. I prepared magic in my hand, firing it off at close range as she passed me by, but she deflected that magic with her bare hands.

Her scythe was coming closer, so I turned it aside with my Katana, only to feel a strange sense of unease. On top of a creak.

“Che!”

Novem sounded disappointed.

“I should have prepared a stronger weapon for you, Lyle. Well, you’d best be careful from now on.”

She skillfully lifted up my blade with her scythe. Once the sword had left my hands, I prepared magic

in both hands.

“Fire bullet!”

When I shot out low-class fire magic from my hands, she cut it through with her scythe. Aiming for that moment, I leapt in and embraced her body. I had thought to lead into a submission or strangle hold.

But even with my full body’s weight against her, Novem didn’t even flinch.

“If you don’t have a weapon, go for magic, and if that doesn’t work, your bare hands. How wonderful.”

She lifted me off with her left hand and threw me a distance. I rolled and stood only to find she wasn’t

before me anymore.

And there from behind.

“That will that never folds... as expected of you.”

I heard a voice right next to my ear. As chills ran down my spine, I leapt from the spot. Novem looked at me and giggled. It was almost as if she had succeeded in some mischievous deed.

“Without any means to go about this, my heart is already on the verge of folding over here, you know?”

As I broke into a cold sweat, Novem smiled.

“If you give up, everyone will die.

Now try to kill me, Lyle."

Novem rapidly approached, so I pulled my gun from my rear holster. As I discharged it, she dodged with a speed great enough to leave an afterimage, and closed in.

I was able to turn aside her scythe with the barrel of the gun. As expected of the gun I got from Vera. It was able to stand up to Novem's strike.

However.

"That wasn't enough. What's more... you didn't even aim for a vital point, did you?"

The laughing Novem went expressionless. I had

subconsciously missed her vitals, and it seems she didn't quite like that.

"... What exactly do you expect me to do?"

Was I even capable of saving Novem? Save... free her from that goddess or evil god or whatever... I didn't want to have to select that option.

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... The ancestors stopped their squabble to look up at the sky.

"No way."

The rowdy Walt House had grown so quiet, the Second's mutter rang through clearly. In the sky, of golden scales... and massive red horns, a dragon looked down over them.

While everyone was put silent, despite all the static, they could still catch Lyle's conversation.

"The lord of a Labyrinth floor mankind has yet to reach? This thing is..."

The First was shaking. That dragon's presence was truly one to rule over all the lands while remaining in the sky. Its sublimity spoke for itself.

It was a monster humanity hadn't

yet a name for, but Novem had called it a Legend Dragon. It truly was a legendary-class monster.

The Sixth quietly readied his halberd.

The Third silently watched the legend unfold in the sky.

To such a place.

“That dragon’s my preeey!!”

As the Seventh rushed off on his horse, he pulled his silver gun and discharged it at the dragon. But from the opposite side, someone had gotten the idea even sooner than him.

“Too bad. I’m first.”

Pushing up his glasses, the one who kept on stabbing daggers into the dragon's presumed weak spots was the Fourth.

The First cried out.

"Bastards! I'm the one who saw it first! I'm the one who'll take it out! Oy, you lot!"

The First's soldiers raised a warcry, while the Second's soldiers urged him on.

The Second sighed as he sent a sharp glare at the dragon.

"If I beat that thing... I'll be a legend. Meaning I'll be the strongest in history. The books will finally have something to say about me."

On his words, the Sixth let out a hearty laugh, as he leapt up to slice at the dragon. On his grand strike, he managed to damage the dragon's scales.

"The strongest is meeee!!"

There, the Seventh yelled at the Sixth.

"Father, I'm going to stuff it, so could you please not damage the surface!? I'm going to blow it up from the inside with these bombs, and make a splendid mantelpiece!"

In the Seventh's gleeful preparations, the one handing over the bombs was Zell. There, extending his galient blade to wreathe the dragon's neck, the Fifth

hopped onto its back.

“Oy, that’s playing dirty!”

The First called for the Fifth to get down, while the Fifth mounted the dragon, reverting his galient blade to its original sword form.

“It’s first-come, first serve. You think poison will work on it?”

As the Fifth tried to pour poison into its open wound, the Sixth cried out.

“Pops! You’re always like that! You try and end things too quickly! Savor the moment some more!”

The Fourth used his floating daggers as footholds to approach the beast. The dragon that started

thrashing due to the Fifth's presence on its back began gathering magic in its mouth to blow away the surroundings.

"I was waiting for that!"

Channeling his magic into his daggers, he threw them one after the next. Preemptively setting off the magic it had gathered, an explosion wrung out in the dragon's mouth.

The Fifth was blown away as well.

"Dammit daaaaddd!!"

The one who approached the blown-away Fifth was a pretty woman. She had horns, and while she'd lost her right arm, she had scales over her other limbs.

May caught the Fifth and landed on the ground. Unlike before, she was in her grown-up form. Seeing her like that, the Fifth...

“M-Maayy! What happened to your arm...”

He looked like he was going to cry. His eyes actually were tearing up. The Sixth looked at him.

“That quilin is? I get the feeling she was supposed to be a little younger.”

The Fifth glared at him. But when he was in a princess cradle from a taller woman, his glare didn’t hold the slightest bit of intimidation.

“Hah? Quilins have all sorts of characteristics! And there’s no way

it could be anyone but May! Are you sure your eyes are properly working!?"

May lowered the Fifth onto the ground.

"Yeah, my arm was taken to the other side. But it'll grow back in a few years."

"So you'll be like that for years!? That Lyle, what the hell is he doing!?"

Seeing the Fifth's rage, his wives whispered amongst themselves.

"When he's mistaken his own sons and daughters before..."
"Why is it when it comes to animals..."
"... If only he didn't have that part

to him."

Seeing the Fifth's wives unable to speak out too strongly against him, the Sixth's wife laughed.

"Hah! It's that passive tone of yours that's no good! Because of that, you even brought trouble to us!"

When she was confessed to and married, the man brought along mistresses as if it were natural. She had grown quite enraged at the Sixth's attitude. And as a result, he had two mistresses, and she had become quite irritated at his mother-in-laws who didn't criticize him for it.

The Sixth silently cut at the dragon. His form was gallant, but... it was

courageous, but... it could only be seen as if he was trying to run away.

The Fifth's and Sixth's soldiers. And the Sixth's brothers and sisters looked at the Dragon in high spirits.

"I'll go at it too!"
"It's a dragon hunt!!"
"You think I should have a whack at it?"

The soldiers prepared ropes, fastening them to nearby rubble as they tossed them to capture the beast. The dragon tried to escape into the sky.

"I won't let you get away!"

The Second fired off arrows of light, incurring a rain of arrows down on the dragon. When those sprinkled

arrows hit, they raised explosions, preventing its upwards flight.

The Seventh also turned his gunpoint, opening up holes in its wings.

“Hmm, we can mend the wings later. We’ll take this dragon down and stuff it. And if we make it the symbol of Lyle’s empire... I will become a legend!”

Zell led his battalion.

“Support Brod-sama! Those who wish for the title of dragonslayer, don’t be sparing with your lives!”

The soldiers who leapt one after the next.

There, leading Ludmilla along, the

Fourth's wife met up with them.

"Hey hold it! Don't stuff it! You need to preciously preserve it, and the next time you need to borrow money, you can just use it as collateral! I'm sure this thing's materials and magic stones will make for a splendid deposit!"

The Fourth seemed to be in agreement. So he turned to the Second and Seventh.

"We're going to cleanly take it apart! And don't think you'll be able to put it together again! We'll take it out in one blow if possible!"

The Fifth yelled at the Fourth.

"Bastard, just recall what you just did! And this thing isn't so fragile.

You have to beat it to...”

“Fredricks~!!”

The Fourth’s wife leapt at the Fifth. His face rubbed, and being in front of everyone, he shied back.

“Mama, stop it!”

There, to the Seventh, late as he was, the previous king of Faunbeux arrived. And upon spotting the Sixth.

“Damn old man Fiennes!! Today is the day I deliver your requiem!”

As the prior king of Faunbeux attacked with his spear, the Sixth raised his hand with a smile.

“Oh the whelp from back then!?

How nostalgic!”

From the other party’s point of view, the Sixth was an existence he couldn’t forget about if he wanted to. He jumped down from his horse and lowered his spear.

“Here I’ll put an end to our cycle of fates…”

But the Sixth he competed with laughed.

“We’re both already long dead. And you see… your granddaughter’s engaged to my great grandson. So can’t we just let it be water under the bridge?”

The past king of Faunbeux opened his mouth blankly for a moment… after which, his face turned bright

red.

“As if I could accept that!!”

He raged.

The Sixth looked quite troubled.

“Wait! Just wait for now! Else the other ancestors are going to take that thing down! Just give me a minute, ‘kay!?”

The Sixth troubled by the king of Faunbeux.

Ludmilla stood still as she took in the scene. Before the dragon that clearly had an aura of majesty, seeing the Walt House members gleefully stand against it left her taken aback. Of all else, they didn’t even know what means of attack

their enemy held.

And yet, me, no me, they all tried to be the first to cut at it. The only one looking on calmly was the Third.

The Third's wife spoke to him.

"You're not going to take part?"

The Third smiled.

"Me? Oh I'll be there to take the final blow. As I thought, at a time like this, it's most efficient to steal in later for the kill."

Dewey looked up at him.

"Sleigh, I think that's a little wrong."

Hearing that from his brother

Dewey, the Third seemed quite flustered.

And.

“Oh my, how interesting. A golden dragon... truly marvelous.”

The Seventh who gleefully discharged his gun at the Legend Dragon reacted to that voice.

“Zenoire!”

As the Seventh raced towards her, Zenoire snapped her red folding fan shut.

“You never came to get me! I had to come here on my own strength. But that dragon truly is nice. It’ll make a nice gift to give to Lyle.”

“T-that’s right.”

“... Dear, you have to defeat it before any of the others. For our cute grandson’s sake, you can at least do that much, can’t you?”

The Seventh tried to say something, but glared at by Zenoire, he lowered his shoulders.

“U-understood. I’ll do my best. Zell! No matter what, we have to take that thing down!”

“Yes, Brod-sama!”

Zenoire looked at the gold dragon- the Legend Dragon- as she stuck out her chest and raised a grand laugh.

“Ohohoho, splendid. Truly splendid!

It'll be the finest of gifts!"

The ones watching her back were the ones who'd forcefully been dragged along, Gracia and Elza. Both of them had begun to wonder whether Celes had inherited her ill nature from this woman. Or so spoke the faces they were making.

"Elza, I'm beginning to think..."

"You don't have to say it. Rather, there's no place for us to do anything."

"Elza, err, about us..."

"I get it, hah, this is beginning to feel silly."

Cut at, with magic raining down incessantly from all sides to bathe

it, the Legend Dragon. A black magic snake wrapped around it, before it exploded in a gale of black flames.

Then captured with the magic raining down from above, a steel ball came at it to blow it away.

The First looked at the Legend Dragon that continued to regenerate.

“You’re all useless! Switch out with me!”

Swinging his large sword around, he cut in. There, perhaps irritated at being called useless.

“Stand down, barbarian! I have a reason I can’t back away! You’re not taking my prize!”

The Seventh continued raining his bullets down on the fallen Legend Dragon.

Ludmilla offered a word as she looked upon the scene.

“I actually feel sorry for it… that poor dragon.”

She muttered…

Chapter 339: Two Swords

… In excitement, the Fourth cut at the gold dragon with a speed great enough to leave afterimages.

“Even this thing’s scales regenerate!”

While he continued shaving them away with his daggers, even the scales that came loose and fell would grow back. His wife looked at him, making a clenched fist of victory.

“This is the best! Keep on securing more of those scales!”

The Fourth's wife went over to confirm one of the scales. Touching it, and lightly tapping her fist over it, she seemed to be verifying its value.

"Fredricks! Over here! Look! I'm sure these scales are precious materials!"

Seeing her mother's innocent laughing figure, Fredricks almost felt the urge to drop his sword.

"... Yeah, looks like it mama."

Nearby, his sons and daughters were launching attacks at the dragon. Hammering in magic and using their Skills, the dragon hadn't been granted the chance to do anything.

Looking upon the scene, Zenoire closed her red fan, and pointed it at the dragon. As it roared, it tried to spread out its wings to blow off all the folks climbing and clinging onto it.

So tried the Legend Dragon, but it found itself sealed in a semi-transparent octahedron. That was Zenoire's Skill.

"How noisy. Can't you pipe down for a bit?"

Within that octahedron, the Legend Dragon was suddenly engulfed in fire. Seeing the dragon burning up within, the Seventh cried out.

"Oooyyy!! Aren't we making a mount of itt!!? At least blow away

its insides!”

It seems he wouldn’t permit the surface being burnt. But there was someone troubled with the innards being blown away in itself.

The First’s wife.

“Don’t screw with me! If you mess up its insides, it’ll be hell to cook! Dear!”

In order to cook it, the First’s wife looked at her husband. She likely wanted him to secure it in good condition. The First straightened his back.

“Y-yes! … Eh? That thing’s edible? It clearly looks unappetizing. It’s all sparkly. Sparkly. My intuition’s telling me that thing will taste

terrible…”

“You won’t know unless you try! So just take a bite and see!”

“You’re testing it on me!!?”

He called out as he shouldered his sword.

A golden dragon. Its horns were blood-red. If one had to say, it didn’t look very tasty.

The Fourth’s wife to the First’s.

“It goes without saying we’re selling the innards! Dragon meat will definitely fetch a fortune! So secure it whole! Why are you the one trying to eat it!?”

The Legend Dragon freed from its

octahedron prison collapsed on all fours, giving some pained breathes. Its burnt surface regenerated.

The Second's wife sped up the speed of her rotating rings as she looked at the beast.

"This thing could probably grow back its wings and horns if it felt up to it. It's tail too.

Everyone's eyes gathered on the dragon.

Around...

"The horns are mine!
"Tail! Get the tail! I'm sure it'll be delicious!
"You've got to get the wings!

The Walt House members fixated

on that dragon. Completely abandoning Lyle, they devoted all their time and effort to the beast. While things weren't going as she had expected, Novem's objective had successfully been fulfilled...

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Dammit! They're all focusing on the dragon and ignoring me!

The group making a ruckus a little ways away irritated me, but as I thougth, Novem before my eyes was my own problem.

I have to do something about it myself.

But...

“When I don’t have a weapon, this one will be harsh.”

Out of breath, I avoided a swipe from Novem’s scythe. As it struck a section of rubble, it cleanly cut through. The cross-section was left in a beautifully smooth state.

There was no doubt a cut from that would prove fatal. Before Novem, something like armor would be akin to paper. No, perhaps even less than paper.

As I ran removing my heavy metal armor, Aria and the others fought the Land Dragon subspecies nearby. To Aria, it was a mismatched foe, and they were quite hard-pressed.

I doubt either of us could come to the others' aid.

Novem chased after me.

"Discarding your protectors was a good decision, but you're making too many openings. If you told me to wait for you, I would."

I honestly considered saying, 'Then could you give me a moment?' But was it really alright to say it? Would she get angry?

But I kinda didn't want to make such a request.

"You're showing way too much leisure!"

As I tossed a chunk of adequately-sized rubble at her, she cut it down

without the slightest drop in speed. I retrieved another and tossed it.

“Again...?”

She cut it down again. But inside was one of the tools I carried around, and once that tube was cut through, it released some irritant smoke.

It was a smoke-screen.

“Hah, got you~.”

Novem instantly ducked out of the smoke, and lowered her scythe at me. Her aim was subtly off from my vitals. But still, the scythe stuck in. Seeing that, Novem gave a smile.

“... Wonderful, Lyle-sama.”

As my illusion disappeared, Novem turned her face towards where I was hiding. I had shown her an illusion through the Third's Skill, but it didn't even buy me time.

I wanted to retrieve a weapon from somewhere, but there wasn't anything weapon-like around. Even if I picked up some discarded sword, it would easily be cut through before Novem's scythe.

Should I match her charge and dodge to get a blow in? But I get the feeling a normal weapon wouldn't be able to scratch her.

My breath was getting terribly disordered. Seeing me like that, Novem floated up lightly from the spread of debris, waiting for me.

“What are you trying to do.”

“Fufufu, it seems I’ve grown tired too, so I’m resting.”

Seeing her laugh, I muttered, ‘horsefeathers,’ within. Not a single bead of sweat, her breathing in perfect harmony, she was clearly waiting for me to finish my preparations. She was grinning. When she was waiting for her own death, why was she able to smile like that?

I gripped the Jewel.

From how long ago... had that action become a habit? When I gripped it, I had gotten around to believe that advice was sure to come.

At present, swarming around the dragon nearby, taking no notice of me were my ancestors and their merry friends... I wanted to tell them to be a bit more useful.

Novem looked at me.

“It seems help isn’t coming. They’re all... enjoying themselves quite a bit.”

While there was a slight gap in her words, things were going according to her plan. Without any hindrances, she tested my ability as she let herself be killed by me.

Regrettably enough, I couldn’t think of any revolutionary solution. If that’s how it was going to be, would my post-Growth high-tensioned self

have been better suited to the task? Am I no good?

I strongly gripped the Jewel. Its silver ornaments had lessened considerably. I began ordering my breath as I resolved myself.

There.

『You're no good at all. Hah, why do you always go so negative? Why not believe in your own strong self some more?』

I heard a voice. A young voice... the voice of LYLE who had disappeared.

"It couldn't be."

Novem's eyes narrowed. She seemed irritated.

“... So I’ve come out again. Even so, for you to be my opponent.”

As a blue light appeared before my eyes, the one with the form of my ten-year-old self, 『LYLE』, came out. His hand gripped the treasured sabre I had received on my birthday.

That in hand, LYLE stood before Novem. And giving a laugh, he spoke.

“I’m not sure what to say about you, Novem. Even I’m getting turned off here. Proclaiming yourself as everyone’s mother, and saying Lyle will be complete if he killed you, you’re quite a twisted one.”

Before LYLE’s smile, Novem swung

her scythe.

“I ask you don’t get in my way. To me, the one I prioritize isn’t you, but the real Lyle behind you...!”

With his sabre, he parried the scythe, getting in a kick. Seeing the scene, I couldn’t conceal my own surprise.

“Wait, can you beat her!?”

On my words, LYLE turned to me as he avoided her swipe.

“Hah? Don’t be foolish. That’s definitely impossible. My specs are stuck at ten-years old, and I’m just your memory of me. What I can do is buy some time. And that was my intent to begin with.”

He had come out to buy time. But what was he trying to do? There, as he took Novem on, LYLE spoke.

“... What are you gripping over there? Broaden your field of vision some more. And believe in yourself. The reason you can exhibit your power in your post-Growth is definitely because you believe in yourself. Right now, you’ve given up somewhere in your heart.”

On LYLE’s words, Celes’ face floated up in my mind. Thinking I definitely couldn’t win alone, I had defeated Celes by gaining comrades. That was because I had accepted I myself wouldn’t be able to win...

Novem cut at LYLE.

"... Don't get in the way!"

Sacrificing his left hand, LYLE struck some magic into her. While he didn't bleed, his left arm turned to beads of blue light, disappearing as if blown away by the wind.

Using the magic explosion, LYLE propelled himself before me, and turned my way.

"You have possibilities in you. And they're right in your hands. Try to remember... the ancestors' weapons all had their characteristics, right? The weapons they specialized in, reflecting their own characteristics. To summarize..."

There, a single line across LYLE's body. The slash from Novem's

scythe had drawn a line across him.

As LYLE faded away, he looked at me.

“You’ve activated your Third Stage Skill. Lyle, you have the qualifications. Now wish for it. If you do, the Jewel will surely answer…”

He disappeared into grains of light. Just to say that, he had gone out of his way to stand here.

“Why do you have to be so nosy?”

As I gripped the Jewel, Novem seemed a bit impatient. Perhaps she didn’t want any more irregularities to occur.

“Lyle, let’s settle…”

There, three more blue lights emerged. The ones who leapt out from them were the three-man team who got along with us back when we were still in Dalien, Rondo, Rachel land Rahu. The three killed by Celes.

“I won’t let you!”
“Novem give it a break already!”
“Hey, here I come!”

The three of them launched attacks onto Novem. But those three, from Novem’s point of view, were nothing more than small fries among minnows. Before they could become strong, they had lain down their lives.

“Why are you here!?”

Rahu-san laughed as he was cut through by Novem.

"... Fool, it's because we want to stand out. We wanted to have an adventure of our own..."

On the scythe's return, Rachel-san was put down as well.

"Lyle, our dreams were left ungranted part-way. So if you're still alive..."

Rachel-san disappeared. And Rondo-san was bisected, sword and all.

"... If you're still alive, then don't give up. That's all I wanted to say."

We were acquaintances. No, friends. The friends I made after

going to the outside were cut down by Novem all-too-easily.

I gripped the Jewel even stronger.

“Nothing but hindrances. But no longer.”

Novem looked at me. The Jewel’s blue light strengthened, its silver ornaments answering my prayers and changing form. A ripple ran down its silver curvature. Its pretty blade was almost like a mirror. The Jewel embedded in its hilt, my silver Katana showed its form.

And even shorter than the one in my right hand, a second one only half its size manifested alongside it.

“I see. So that’s what sort of weapon it is.”

As Novem cut at me, the silver weapons met.

“... It seems you’ve gotten your hands on a nice weapon. I’m delighted. Now cut at me with that blade, Lyle!”

I grinned.

“Then I guess I’ll have to answer to your request.”

I swung the swords in my hands. Weight, and the feel they gave when I held them. They all matched up with my style, making them exceedingly easy to swing. As I cut at her consecutively with my two blades, Novem circled around to defense.

I need to go faster!

“Kuh!”

Novem grew unable to manage with her scythe. I jumped up. As I moved over Novem, I spun to build up speed. Looking at Novem as she tried to dodge, I tossed the short sword in my left hand.

The sword was deflected. But in the next instant, I was gripping the deflected sword in my hand.

Nearby Novem, that was.

“While the noise is terrible, I can use Skills to an extent.”

With the katana, I cut at Novem’s back... a diagonal cut from her nape. I could feel the blade pass deeply through her body.

Novem laughed.

“Splendid. So amplifying your Skills is that weapon’s property. It’s a wonderful weapon most suited to you, Lyle-sama.”

Novem laughed, but I laughed along. A weapon in order to pull off Skills... sure enough, it was a weapon for me, who had gotten all the way here by relying on my ancestors’ Skills.

But no one said that was all there was to it.

“Too bad, Novem... what I cut was...”

Novem opened her eyes wide and took some distance from me. Once she had moved in an instant, she

touched her own body to confirm.

When she should have been cut, there was no trace of it.

“That can’t be. I set my body not to regenerate... and I’m sure that...”

“Yeah, you were cut.”

I swung my two katanas to the side, taking a stance.

“The goddess, and evil god Novem was.”

As I turned the blades towards her, she made a face as if to say she couldn’t believe it. My silver weapon... the two katana only cut what I wanted them to cut. The Skill assist was nothing more than an added bonus.

“I’m going to cut it all off, pull it all off, and... Novem, I’m going to strip you bare.”

Novem glared at me as she cut forward. It seems she was trying to destroy my weapons.

But if I knew her objective, the rest was easy. I predicted her scythe’s trajectory, and cut her again.

Within my heart, I cried out. I can do it... if it’s me, I can do it. I can save Novem. If it’s me... because it’s me, I can.

Just like when my tensions were high, I had to believe in myself. To exhibit my powers to their very limits. For that sake, first...

“What’s wrong? That’s the second

one. If you're going to let yourself be cut up like that, you'll be naked in no time."

... I tried riling her up.

Chapter 340: The Walt House is Number One

The katanas in my hands sparkled.

The blue light created shockwave tails to my strikes, and when they hit against Novem's scythe, they glistened with blue sparks. We both increased our speed, and as her desperation had grown slightly from before, I could see panic... and anger grace Novem's face.

As she took a horizontal swipe, I passed underneath, crossing my blades over, and pulling them from inside to out. I rolled across the

ground to pass her by, and instantly stood to reset my stance.

Making a smile, I exchanged a bluff.

“Hasn’t your speed fallen from before? And this is just my personal opinion, but... I’d prefer your skirt a little shorter.”

Right now, she was wearing a skirt that reached her ankles. As she turned to face me, the skirt did lightly spread out. But it was too long to show any of the good parts. At the just-barely mark, it quietly drifted down.

“... Why don’t you ask that of the other women to become your wives?”

I took a step in.

“Sorry, I’ve already prepared a seat for you. But worry not… even if you haven’t fallen for me, I’ll make you fall in no time!”

Remember. Remember. I need to remember how I was in my high tensions. Remember that sensation I had when I thought I could do anything!

My heart continued whispering to me. If I showed the slightest weakness, I would fall apart. At the very least, the very least, the very least, I needed to continue on. So that my voice would reach Novem.

Not some evil god. Not some goddess. Novem… in order to reach her!

I parried her blow with the short sword, piercing through her heart with the katana. She didn't spurt any blood. Seeing that, Novem's expression warped.

"You can't be so selfish forever!"

"Poppycock! All the Walt House's generations... they've all been selfish!"

Stepping in further, I entered her bosom so she couldn't reach me with her scythe, this time stabbing my short sword into her.

"They entered pioneering brigades so their first love would look their way!"

As I forced my impaled blades through her sides, Novem parted.

“They couldn’t be honest, rebelling against their parents to the end!”

I approached Novem to prevent her from taking distance, using an illusion to avoid an attack from her scythe. Perhaps she was considerably flustered, as she looked straight at the projection.

“They punched the king because they got pissed off...”

Lining up the two katanas, I took a horizontal swipe at her

“... They worked hard in internal affairs because they loved money!”

As Novem held up her left hand, I tossed my katana and short sword in opposite directions. When she fired off magic, I first collected the

short sword and cut at her. When that was blocked, I instantly warped to the katana, collected it, and cut at her again.

It was shallow, but I managed to graze her flank.

“They doted on animals over their children!”

And following on with that motion, I unleashed some consecutive swipes. Holding both swords in a backhand grip, I spun, kicking the scythe out of the way, cutting again and again. I didn’t care how shallow they were, I focused on nothing but cutting at her.

“They ran out of the house because they hated their parents!”

Novem grit her teeth. I produced four illusions and cut at her from all sides. Warping above her, I continued to spin as I lowered the blade.

“Even if they knew it would be impossible, they tried to prove how amazing the gun was!”

To be blunt... our house was a selfish one.

Novem looked at me as she directed her left hand. From it, a number of small balls of fire. A few thousand, tens of thousands were fired off.

Parting as I sliced through and avoided her rounds...

“Again, just like that, you continue to speak of nothing but their bad

points…”

“… And just like that, you continue beautifying them and ignoring their bad points! When you only looked at whatever you wanted to see, don’t try calling yourself a mother!”

My katana’s picked up the wind, blowing away the flames. The fireballs swept up raised explosions as they landed on the ground. As Novem raised her left hand up, she let off an electric discharge. Looking at the discharge that gradually grew, I stuck the short sword into the ground and attacked.

As the lightning she let out gathered at the short sword, I passed her by as I cut with all my might.

Instantly turning and cutting her back, Novem brandished her scythe, so I warped towards the short sword. Retrieving it and gripping both blades in my hands, I took a deep breath.

Novem also breathed with her shoulders and hung her head. Her hair was a mess, from the gaps in her sweat-stuck locks, I could see her violet eyes scowling my way.

"... But I! ... even so, I! ... for the sake of the future!"

I sucked in a lot of air, and yelled. I yelled from my heart.

"Who cares about ruin and whatever mess happened in the past!? I... I... rather than some

distant future to come, today, and tomorrow... I'm much more scared of the bloodshed my wives will bring!"

Something happened in the past.

That's why Novem and the others were born. I know that.

But if you'll let me have my say... if you'll let us have our say...

"The distant past and distant future are irrelevant! If you ignore the all-important present, then past and future are meaningless, goddammit! To me, at this very moment... are you happy right now? Can you stick out your chest and say you're living the dream? The current you... what are you thinking right now!?"

Not the Novem who thinks of the future.

Or the Novem bound by the past.

I wanted to know the feelings of the current Novem Forxuz.

Novem took a stance with her scythe.

“Again... and again... just shut up! My feelings are... no one... as if anyone could understand! No one understands! I know no one will understand! It’s because no one understands, that I...!!”

She shed a single tear. Seeing that, I laughed. She was starting to chip. The evil god and goddess chipping away, Novem’s natural feelings were coming to the surface.

“Look right there, I’ve peeled off the mask! That’s right, give me more! Expose yourself more! Expose it all before me! And when you do... I’ll accept it all for you!”

As I directed the points of my swords, Novem took a large step towards me. The rubble where she stood was blown away, and she approached me at a high velocity.

“Like hell anyone could accept it!”

I instantly swung my katana, the blade passing through her as her body went by.

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... Protected by hard scales, before the metallic land dragon, Aria was breathing hard.

Her red hair in disorder, sweat was dripping down from her body. The spear she gripped was also in tatters. Before the Land Dragon protected by sturdy scales, Aria was mismatched.

“Good grief... when I want to go help Lyle out. I really am lacking in power.”

Did she want to cry or to laugh?

Aria didn’t know her own feelings. Clara held up her staff and directed a strong light at the beast. While its sight was lost, Eva fired an arrow.

While the arrow that stuck in

between its scales exploded, the Land Dragon didn't even flinch.

From the sky, Monica and the Valkyries hit it with their attacks, but the most they could do was seal off its movements. Novem had selected the perfect monster to buy time.

In the sky, Monica clicked her tongue.

"How persistent!"

She rained a few hundred lines of light down on the Land Dragon, but the dragon curled up into a ball and endured it. While its surface would turn red from the heat, it would instantly cool and return to its original hue.

Aria got her breathing in order, regaining a firm grip on her shaft. In her left hand, she gripped her red gem.

“How many more times... no, I’ll attack with all my might however many times it takes.”

Even now, her body was screaming out. From an excess use of Skills, her burden was becoming too great to carry. The burden from consecutive use in a short space of time was weighing in heavily on her.

Stepping in with her feet was an annoyance.

As she was in such a state, a hand touched her back. The feeling of

four right hands... alongside a red light, a gentle voice enveloped her.

『Do your best.』
『Show them the power of the Lockwarde House.』
『... We've all seen how hard you've worked.』

And at the end, a voice that reminded her of her own.

『That man's descendant and my own were able to meet. I'm sure this is fate. So Aria, we will lend you power... the power to take one more step forward.』

As the red gem's glimmer strengthened, the fatigue was blown away from Aria's body. And an explosive burst of strength broke

out from within.

A red light impregnated the spear in her hands. Just a little more... a little further.

"...!"

But the Land Dragon before Aria's eyes sensed the danger, and attacked. It intended to crush Aria with the highest priority.

"Aria!"

Eva's arrows came at the dragon's eyes, and hit dead on. But perhaps the Land Dragon felt an even greater danger from Aria, as it continued its charge.

Even with Monica and the others attacking from the sky, it wouldn't

falter at all. Laser-weapon-centric Monica called out.

“Live rounds would be more effective!”

Clara looked around, and looked towards Porter’s debris-buried loading tray.

“Porter, please.”

The loading tray portion blasted off the rubble and made a sudden departure. As it rammed into the dragon’s flank, the Land Dragon trampled over it with its large forelimbs.

There, attacked to its round, pillar of a head, Porter’s two eyes that were supposed to be mere ornaments started to glow.

Raising its face, the magic ore embedded in its chest let off a strong light. Raising a wind, and just like that, Porter's upper half attacked the Land Dragon. Forcing it to retreat, it went and instigated an explosion. The grand explosion scattered rubble, and made all present feel the shock wave. Once that had passed, Clara was left dumbfounded.

"No... I never gave such an instruction..."

Monica from above.

"I didn't program such functionality... did it go haywire? I guess that what I get for forcing on so many modifications."

From the smoke, the worn-out land dragon took a step forward. And dragging its body behind, a second.

Opening its mouth, the dragon spat up blood. But even so, it advanced.

Aria opened her eyes wide. In her violet pupils dwelled a red light, and she felt as if her back was being supported up.

『... Show them all. And never hang your head. You're a splendid daughter of the Lockwarde House.』

As a red light enveloped her, rubble flew from the land she kicked off from. The girl rose into the air, and even the sky. The Land Dragon was unable to keep up with Aria's speed,

only raising its face to the sky in an attempt to follow her.

There a single line of red light.

The Land Dragon was cleanly bisected, slowly splitting into halves.

And standing rom the split portion was Aria. Her spear leaned against her shoulder, while clad in a red light, she spoke to all.

“Let’s go. I won’t be able to calm down until I knock a good one into that idiot Novem.”

At the end of Aria’s eyes were the forms of Novem and Lyle.

Monica swooped down over the ground, collecting up Porter’s

distorted head. Clara raced over to Monica's midst.

Eva called out to the two.

"I'll be going ahead."

So together with Aria, they headed for Lyle. The Valkyries followed behind them as well. But everyone lent a gaze to Porter.

Monica clutched its head tight.

"... I can't just write it off as a haywire machine. You were also our splendid comrade, Porter..."

Clara offered a silent prayer to her partner who'd accompanied her so long...

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... Before what was once Centralle's front gate, the Eighth Generation Head of the Walt House, Maizel Walt led his army, scattering skeletal soldiers as he entered the city.

The Eighth watched the fighting in the middle of Centralle.

"We're too late. But it isn't over yet."

To his side, his wife Claire nodded.

"Yes, it has yet to end. We must give a proper apology to Lyle."

Much of the enemy forces had been

concentrated at the front, so Maizel's unit was the last. Around was a beastly warrior, and the figure of Maksim in his armor of sand.

The beast warrior surpassed the ramparts in a long stride ahd hurried ahead. On its shoulders were Miranda and Shannon, and Milleia.

Milleia looked at the multiple battles going on in the distance as she spoke to Miranda.

"We're heading for the golden dragon."

Shannon looked up at Milleia.

"Eh? What about Lyle?"

Milleia lightly shrugged her

shoulders.

“Let’s give him a little time. It looks like Lyle has his own battles too. More importantly, there’s someone I want to give a good whooping to. Shannon... you’ll help me, won’t you?”

To Milleia’s smile that wouldn’t take no or an answer, Shannon nodded a number of times.

Miranda inspected the gold dragon’s beaten form.

“But it looks like it’s going to end over there too.”

There, Milleia spoke.

“That’s precisely why. I want to get in their way a bit.”

Milleia gave a grin...

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... While there were legions fighting the Legend Dragon, it was generally the seven ancestors conducting most of the attacks.

The First swung his giant sword about.

“You coward! Coming out so late in the game!”

Extending his invisible sword, the Third laughed as he inflicted a deep wound on the dragon.

“Now then, what could you be talking about? Man~, if things go this way, then I’ll be the one landing the finishing blow, won’t I? Golly, that sure would stand out. You think that would make me the strongest of the heads of history? Well, I’m the one who stayed in the Jewel to the end, so it’s only natural!”

As the Legend Dragon opened its mouth, the Third shortened his sword, before extending it to deeply pierce through its throat.

Having Faunbeux’s previous king step down, the Sixth who had finally returned to dragonslaying cried out in horror. At the Legend Dragon.

“E-endure it! You’ve still got fight in you left, Legend Dragon! Shatter that cowardly blade of his!”

The Fifth looked at the Third.

“That bastard’s plainly strong. If it’s just swordplay, he’s quite high up there. Who in the hell thought it was a good idea to give a guy like that a weapon like that!?”

The Second readied his bow.

“It’s because you always sneak around the important matters!!”

The Fourth seemed vexed.

“B-but wasting any more time would be...”

The Seventh tried to aim his

gunpoint at the Third.

“Unhand me, Zell! I’ll shoot him down here!”

“You can’t, Brod-sama!”

As the Third retracted his sword in midair, he gave his body a spin. And with a bit of centrifugal force, the sword he sent through its neck moved to cleanly lop it off.

“Ahahaha, my bad! … What!?”

But an impact run against his blade part-way, and the Third’s balance broken, the Legend Dragon nailed to the ground got to live a little longer.

Looking down on the Third was a beastly golem. On its shoulder was

Milleia, who was handing a one-shot musket to Shannon. What's more, she was smiling.

"That woman!! She still holds a grudge for me teasing her!"

On that, even the gentle Third flew into a rage at his attempt at the dragon-slayer title impeded. There, the Sixth looked at Milleia.

From the Sixth's point of view, it looked as if Shannon had fired the gun.

"So she missed. But good work! Milleia, you made it in time!"

Looking at the Sixth, Milleia smiled and waved. But when she looked at the third, she directed an uncouth grin.

Silently opening her mouth, she conveyed a message of, ‘How. About. That.’ To the Third.

The Legend Dragon opened its large mouth, wringing out its final spurt of strength. Soaring high above it, a single heroine… the First’s wife held her glaive in both hands, putting all her power into a single blow to sever its head.

And landing on the ground, she impaled her polearm into it.

“Good grief, just how long did you plan to take!? I’m already done over there, so let’s have some grub. And I’m going to go call that young’un who’s still fighting over there, so you all follow along. Make sure you properly cut up the dragon! Make

sure to drain it too."

Around, the barbarian-looking men all responded at once.

"Yes, boss!"

They all lowered their heads. With all the achievements nabbed away, the ancestors reluctantly followed behind the First.

"Grandma, I'm coming too!"

"Okay, stay close to your grandmother. Good grief, how long are they going to be flirting like that? I'm going to work them hard in preparing this banquet. While I'm at it, I'll tease them too."

"Yay! As I thought, my grandma is amazing!"

“You’d bet it. Otherwise, there’s no way I could be a Walt House wife… look, be careful where you walk. There’s lots of rubble around.”

Rather than lots of rubble, they were on a mountain built of it.

The First’s wife and Dewey held hands. Harsh as her mouth was, her expression was gentle.

And continuing on with the First’s wife who proclaimed Lyle was flirting around, the ancestors and their wives followed behind.

The First lowered his shoulders.

“What’s with this. She could have at least let me have the last blow this time.”

The Second put his hand on his shoulder.

“Hey, let’s go. Once we get Lyle, we’re having a banquet.”

The First locked shoulders with him.

“Banquet has a nice ring to it! Let’s have a grand feast of dragon meat! … But I still can’t think it’ll taste any good.”

Father and son laughed together.

And looking upon their form, the Third walked with the Fourth and the Fifth.

“My plan was ruined.”

“That one made me draw back.

Please reflect on your actions."

"Even for me, that was too much. Repent."

The Third's, Fourth's and Fifth's wives walked behind them. They didn't jump into their husband's conversations. The Fourth's wife alone carried loads of pretty scales under her arms, appraising their worth.

The Sixth and Seventh cowered at the wives following behind.

"Why am I the only one with this grating air..."

"You reap what you sow. When it's hell even with one, it's your fault for marrying three."

There, Zenoire closed her fan with a snap. With a gentle smile on her face, she intimidated the Seventh.

“Dear?”

“Just kidding! I’m happy that I married the best wife in the world!”

The Sixth looked at the Seventh and laughed. And Milleia who descended the beast warrior met up with him.

“Brother, let my accompany you.”

“Oh sure, come along! I’m sure you’re curious about Lyle and Novem too.”

There, in a beaten-up state, the previous king of Faunbeux raced over to him.

“Damn old man! What do you mean my granddaughter’s your great grandson’s mistress!?”

The Sixth fled with a smile, and Milleia followed behind. So too the past king of Faunbeux. The Seventh sighed as he looked over the three.

“... Good grief, they sure are lively.”

He said...

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... Ludmilla and the others were left behind.

Elza looked around quite troubled.

Those around had started to dissect the Legend Dragon.

“Oy, how are we supposed to dissect it?”
“I think you’re supposed to eat it from the innards.”
“Bring some ale. Ale! By the barrel! There has to be some somewhere. If the armies were here, there’s surely some around.”

Gracia was also troubled over what to do. There, Miranda undid her golem and landed on the ground.

Shannon turned to everyone.

“What are you doing? Let’s get going already. If we don’t get this over with, the banquet can’t begin, she said.”

On her friend Shannon's words, Elza walked off.

"T-that's right. I don't know if a banquet is the right thing to do, but... well, we can't just abandon Lyle and the others."

Gracia spoke, intermingled with a sigh.

"Goddess, when I've come so far, I might as well tag along to the end. Throw anything you got at me!"

Miranda made a tired and reluctant face. While sweeping her hair behind her ear, she started walking.

"If there's any more of this, I'd really like some slack. And if we don't make a few things clear, I'll be irritated. I've got so smack Novem

around a bit too."

Ludmilla held her sheathed longsword in her left hand as she looked at the group heading forwards...

"... They're way too out there, that Walt House. Rather than strongest... they're plain absurd."

Chapter 341: An End and a Beginning

The two silver blades met the silver scythe.

Sparks scattered, and we were both covered in sweat as we faced one another. The smile of leisure had disappeared from Novem, her emotions beginning to come to the surface.

A rougher tone. The usual Novem who always looked somewhat unperturbed was nowhere to be seen. Her tears fell in large droplets.

“I always had so many memories. There was never me. I’m just someone’s replacement, I know. I always knew... and yet, at this point... saying something like that at this point, just how painful do you thing that is for me!?”

Supporting up her scythe with the short sword, I inflicted a shallow cut with the katana. My silver weapon would reliably cut what I wanted to cut, without leaving a single scratch on what I wanted intact.

So in contrast to my tattered state, Novem was neat and tidy. There wasn’t the slightest grime on her clothes or skin. Her sweat and tears were the end of it.

Meanwhile I was covered in blood, sweat and mud, and the sand and dust stuck down hard on me. But this situation had me advantageous.

“If you can think that way, that means you’re right there! Say it... go out and say how you feel! It never gets across. Your voice never reaches me! Do you hate me? Love me!? You love me, don’t you!? Say you love me!”

If she said she hated me here, I’d get depressed... no, forget it! Don’t grow weak. If you show weakness, you’ll crumble at once.

Novem gripped her scythe in both hands, her movements duller than before. But from a general perspective, she was still going at

an incredibly fast speed. She was definitely weaker than she had been before. No, the evil god and goddess' powers were being shaved away, and Novem was reverting.

I parried her slash with the katana in my left hand. But Novem stuck into my stomach with the hilt portion.

I opened my mouth at the impact.

"Khah!"

My breath was forcefully spat out, and I was sent flying a distance. As I rolled over the rubble... it was extremely painful. I forcefully stood, and there I found the form of Novem holding her scythe high. She made a bloodcurdling expression.

“If I hated... if I hated you... I’d never have served you so! I love you. Not the Lyle-sama of the past. The current Lyle-sama! I loved how you worked with all your might. But all I’m capable of is... and yet, come so far, you say such a thing!? Before, you wouldn’t even look at me!”

I dodged the blow she lowered at me and the scythe pierced into the ground. As I corrected my stance, I readied my two swords.

“What are you talking about!?”

“Back when I commuted to the Walt House mansion! You never looked my way! But still, even so... I thought I could be of some use. I thought it! And now what!?”

When my engagement to her had been decided? Back then, I was treated coldly; betrayed by everyone around me, I had grown to hate humans. But even so, I tried to get my parents to look my way.

... Wait a damn second there.

“Hey! You’ve got some fault in that one! You’ll forget the dealings you made with Celes and blame me for that one!? It’s because of you I almost developed severe anthropophobia! No, I really did develop it! Take some responsibility and take me!”

“...!”

As her movements dulled, I laughed. At my grin, Novem made a

blank expression. But it was to late.

“That opening... I’m taking it!”

I crossed my katana’s diagonally and swung them across, cutting into her deeply. As Novem’s face grimaced in pain, she punched me away with her left hand.

As I floating in the air, I purposely let go of my two katanas. Novem approached me as I floated, coming before my eyes and lifting up her scythe.

“I liked you. That’s why it was so painful. And yet, you... Lyle-sama seemed to be having so much fun. I kept telling myself I’d disappear someday... that’s why I gathered so many!”

I'm sure she was talking about the harem. When she went and gathered them on her own, what does she mean it was painful? I don't think I'm at fault here. Novem's the one who gathered them. Though it's true I began assertively calling out to women half-way down the line.

Right before she lowered her scythe onto me, I warped to where my katana had flown. Gripping the hilt, I noticed there was less noise than before. I could use Skills all I wanted.

"You're the one who gathered them. Don't make it sound like it's my fault!"

As she turned in midair, she threw

her scythe at me. I instantly warped, this time to my short sword that had found itself a ways away.

“Then... will you get rid of them all, and look at me alone? I definitely didn’t want there to be others. I didn’t, but... I endured it and gathered them. Since I was going away someday, I had to make sure you wouldn’t be lonely!

“That’s overkill, fool! And at this point, I’m not abandoning a single one of them! ... They’re all my women! Like I’d hand them over to anyone!”

“AAaaaaAaaaAaargh!!”

As I looked at Novem’s fit of insanity, I produced illusions

around. It had grown much easier to do than before. As Novem attacked the illusions with her bare hands, I threw the shortsword, and stuck it into her.

When she raised her right hand, the scythe returned to it. What a convenient staff.

I spoke apologetically.

“If I drove them out now, you’d question my humanity, wouldn’t you!? Like I could do that!”

... If I’m the one saying it, is it already too late? Or so the question floated up. No, don’t grow weak! You’re fine. You’re still fine!

As Novem approached, I stabbed at her again. Pulling out the short

sword stuck into her, I kicked the scythe away, and leapt back to take some distance.

Novem loosely let the scythe hang down as she hung her head.

"... I really am a terrible woman. I want to monopolize Lyle-sama. When I see you kiss other women... another Novem inside me says, 'this is the onset of unlimited possibility.' But inside I tell her, 'no, f*ck this'... so a lot of Novems come to wipe out my will, and I'm left just smiling and watching. I don't want it anymore. This is hell. So... please be good and listen to what I have to say. Kill me. If you don't... I will... end up killing all the other women around you."

Well damn! A chill ran down my spine! B-but... killing Novem is out of the question. I don't want to be killed either, and having my other comrades killed is out of the question.

"No to all of it. I said it, didn't I... I'm a selfish man."

Hearing my answer, Novem slowly raised her scythe. In it, Mana began to gather. That magic density. I could tell her output was rising to overwhelming levels.

"In that case... with me... please die with me!"

I never thought her desire to monopolize would be this strong.

Just looking at the scale of her

magic, it was enough to blow away the area. Taking a stance with my swords, I thought over whether to warp, or try to endure, when...

“How deplorable.”

From behind, I heard the voice of a woman. A nostalgic voice, and yet it somehow sounded different to what I thought I knew of it. Looking at not me but Novem, she spread out her arms.

“You’re a thoroughly hopeless woman, are you not! Before love comes into the question, you’re a failure as a wife!”

There, my Mother... Claire had appeared. When she looked at me, she made quite a sorrowful smile.

And clearing his throat, the one who appeared, was...

“Y-yes. Um... let’s leave that matter between the women. Lyle, it’s been a while.”

My father. As the two of them came before me, Novem made a conflicted face. Novem spoke.

“Maizel-sama... Claire-sama.”

When Novem released her magic, my mother deployed a shield up front. No, she had deployed a shield to surround Novem. The only place blown away was her immediate surroundings.

“... I’m sure I no longer have the rights to say it. But Novem, the current you has no qualifications to

marry Lyle. And I'll just put this out there. I'm the one who gave birth to Lyle! Even if I'm a failure as a mother, that truth isn't changing! I've no mind to concede the title to you!"

As she undid the shield, Novem's form emerged from the streams of smoke. She had dropped her scythe to the ground, and sat down on the spot.

My father looked at Novem, making a bit of a sorrowful face.

"I'm thankful that you supported up Lyle. But don't say something so sad. I know I've no obligation to say it, but... please, don't hurt Lyle any more. I'm begging you."

Hearing my father's words, Novem spilled her tears over the rubble. Her fighting spirit was greatly chipped away. I looked at her in that state.

"Listen, Novem. I'm..."

There, I heard a woman's voice. Hearty, a voice as if it could reach anywhere.

"Blah, blah, you're all too noisy, you brats! In the end, what is it you want to do!?"

As I turned, holding the hand of a small child... young Dewey who I'd seen in the Second's memories, a woman leaned a glaive over her shoulder as she looked this way. The glaive's blade portion looked

large and bulky. It definitely wasn't something to handle with one hand.

Dewey waved over at me. I also returned a small wave. There, the woman glared at me. She turned the tip of her weapon this way.

"And you! You call yourself a man of the Walt House!? Just look at Basil! Basil! That guy's an idiot, so he doesn't get any of the complicated stuff!"

Behind the woman, the First muttered some displeased complaints.

"I just happen to like the simpler ways, and I'm not an idiot..."

The woman of valor spoke to me.

“But he always holds himself boldly. And he always makes his point clear! This world doesn’t run on pretty ideals alone! Make it clear! Do you like that brat over there? How much do you love her? If you have loads of women around you, then make a ranking! Just because you say you’ll love them all equally…”

Behind the glaring woman, I could see the Fifth. In a small voice.

“In the first place, I think harems are formed on the premise of equal love or something… well, whatever. If I speak out, I get the feeling I’m in for some pain too.”

Don’t give up. Do something about her. Remember back when you

were in the Jewel. Where did all those reliable ancestors go? Are you guys the real deals?

The Fourth pushed up his glasses, smiling a bit.

“Well, you reap what you sow. I’m glad I only got one wife.

It’s no good, he was the usual Fourth. He wasn’t of any use outside of financial matters. The Second looked at me and shook his head.

“Give it up. That’s the sort of person my mom is. But she’s surprisingly kind, you know. Can be scary as heck, though.”

Then show some of that kindness now! If I had to find some kindness

in this warrior woman, all I could spot was her hand linked with her grandson's.

She lowered her glaive at the ground. In the back, the Sixth made a pale face as he was surrounded by three women.

"You heard her. Ranking's important, right?"
"So just tell them. I'm number one."
"Now, now, you just have to tell them your honest feelings."

The Sixth tried to shrink his large body as his eyes swam about. Nearby, Milleia-san glared at the wives surrounding him with cold eyes.

"L-look. Right now we're dealing

with Lyle's problem."

He turned the conversation to me. No, he returned it. As I thought, the Sixth was no use in female relations. And when she was around the Sixth, Milleia put up an act and served no use.

Before I had noticed it, the Seventh and grandma Zenoire had appeared as well. The two of them waved their hands.

"Lyle, rejoice! We've got our hands on an extremely large dragon! And Maizel... I'm knocking you upside the head, so come over here."

"You've grown so big, Lyle! Your grandma is proud. We took down a dragon to give you as a gift. It's all

gold and gorgeous! And Maizel and Claire... come here and grovel before me."

... That's not it. Both of you, I don't care about that right now. Presents and such are... wait, that Legend Dragon's being treated as a gift?

My parents silently headed over to my grandparents. I could only see them off. While they turned to me a number of times... I'm sorry, I can't save you now.

Because that warrior woman's still glaring at me!

There, the Third scratched his head as he looked towards me. Nearby was the form of a manly-looking woman. I'm sure she was his wife.

As he looked at me, he made a fed-up expression.

The Third thought a bit and opened his mouth.

“Hah, Lyle... honestly, that battle back there was interesting. I’d never thought you’d be able to make the finale so exciting. When you’re not even mr. lyle, the true Best Lyle... was Lyle himself!”

He stuck up his thumb and sent a smile. I felt a bad premonition, and all on board, the Fourth spoke.

“But my Best Lyle still has to be, ‘Marvelous,’ perhaps? Thinking back on it now, it was a word that perfectly displayed his being in its entirety.”

The Fifth refuted.

“No, that’s no good. That was a Best Lyle built off the circumstance. In the middle of two female camps glaring at one another, spreading his hands to the heavens, a topless Lyle... Marvelous isn’t enough to get the point across. I’ll have to go for a safer, ‘I’m a man loved by the Goddesses’ that you can convey to anyone.”

Don’t earnestly dispute it. Now’s not the time for that. The Sixth asserted himself.

“Then I’m on, ‘kiss the sleeping princess’!”

The Seventh made a refreshed face as he punched my father.

“’Fantastic’ was also nice. Blowing away the symbol of Beim as he laughed was cool. Though I must admit he didn’t use enough gunpowder.”

The Second looked around.

“I don’t really know much, so I can’t decide.”

No, don’t look so disappointed. The First looked at me, making a fed-up face as he remained mindful of his warrior wife.

“Dude, what are you doing? Don’t mind us, just do something about Novem-chan already. She’s crying, ain’t she?”

I looked at Novem. Around, my comrades had begun to gather.

Aria, Miranda, Shannon, Clara, Monica, Eva, May, Gracia, Elza, Ludmilla... and the Valkyries.

They were all here. There, the woman warrior spoke to me.

“It’s amazing that with everyone here, you still have more. Well, you’re aiming for emperor. With this many under your arms, you should do fine. Now then, let’s hear your answer.”

I looked over them all. Things were headed towards me confessing in front of them all.

On top of my grinning ancestors, their wives... Huh? Why do I have to confess here to begin with? Let’s find someplace quieter, and...

"... Oy, hurry up with it."

The woman glared at me. Young Dewey looked my way as well.

"Lyle, do your best."

Right, he supported me. What's this, for some reason, it feels wrong to confess in front of such an innocent boy. And when this innocent youth was supposed to be the elder brother, when it came to the Third...

"Gosh~, it sure is helpful you're all here to decide the Best Lyle. I had a feeling it would come to this."

Dammit! ... Hah, I'd best just resolve myself already.

I let go of the silver weapon. There,

as if it had finished its purpose, it reverted to the Jewel. The Jewel I hung around my neck was losing its light.

“Novem. I can’t abandon everyone. I don’t want to.”

Novem looked down. The surrounding female camp listened to my words with earnest faces. I wonder what this is, I really want to run away. But I don’t think I’d be able to.

“But you were the one who was always by my side from the moment I left the mansion. I like you. There were times I thought it wouldn’t be bad to just settle down and live a quiet life with you.”

Novem raised her face.

“I’m a pain to deal with. I’ve lost a majority of the power of the past Novem.”

I came over to her side.

“I don’t care about that. Honestly, rather than past or future, my present reality is the heaviest! If you’re not with me, I’m going to be crushed! You got that!? Your beloved Lyle’s going to be crushed flat! Even now, supporting up everyone is my limit! I’ve long since surpassed that limit and gone into overtime! So about whatever happened in the past, or what the future holds... it’s impossible, I tell you! Even if you place your expectations on me, there’s not

much I can do!”

Novem shook her head.

“No... I don’t want that! I don’t want... Lyle-sama to be crushed.”

I stood her up.

“We travelled together. And we’ve come all the way here.”

“... Yes.”

I slowly embraced her. Resting my head on her shoulders, I put strength into my embrace.

“So together with me, let’s live in the present. I want to live with you. I want to be with you. So stay by my side.”

"..... Yes."

As Novem burst into tears, I spoke.

"You're my number one. Not the evil god or goddess. Or any Novem of history. The current you. Novem... I love you. So stay by my side forever!"

When I said that, the surroundings grew quiet. I was too scared to look at the faces of the surrounding women. But Novem wrapped her arm around my back, gripping onto my clothes. She let her tears flow, and leaked sobs as she cried.

"Yes. I'll be with you forever. So Lyle-sama... please keep me by your side."

As we clung onto one another,

cheers and whistling rang out around. As I looked around in surprise, I found the soldiers the ancestors called had met up with my own main army.

... Confessing in front of a few hundred thousand? Seriously, cut me some slack. If I knew it would come down to this, I'd have chosen some cooler lines!

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... In Centralle where the battle had ended, the ancestral women cooked up the Legend Dragon and Land Dragon subspecies.

The First's wife glared at the Second's.

"Hey, what's this? It doesn't taste like anything."

"It's a taste only cultured people understand. Isn't it because you're so crude that you don't get it?"

Both made smiles as veins popped on their foreheads and the two exchanged blows. Around, preparations for the banquet were hurrying along, and Novem and the others helped out as well.

As Shannon tried to snack on the fried Land Dragon, Miranda lowered a fist on her head.

"... Ow."

A teary Shannon held her head with both hands, and Miranda sighed. She looked around. The main members of the heads of history gathered around him, Lyle was using all sorts of gestures to complain about something.

Those around listened in and laughed.

To Miranda came Vera with gifts. It seems she had found ale and spices from the rubble of Centralle.

“Hey, where should I bring these supplies?”

An injured May sat atop the crates being pulled in, as she exchanged a glass with Marina.

“This ale’s great!”

“I know, right? But this is a splendid mountain of rubble. The place was blown away quite cleanly.”

May rejoiced over her drink while Marina looked around.

“Leave the spices, and distribute the ale. Rather, how long are they going to stay?”

The one to react to Miranda’s words was Claire. On the lowest wrung of the wives of history, she was treated quite poorly. A white cloth wrapped around her head, she wore an apron. Surely she was being worked hard to repent for this series of events.

“Oh? Don’t want us? You don’t want us here? Imperial nobles

really are the worst. Only their mouths know how to move."

Miranda shook as a vein rose on her forehead. It had been like this for a while. After rejoicing over her reunion with Lyle, Claire had learned of the numerous women surrounding him, and grown quite irritated.

"Well, at least they're more decent than a parent who abandoned their child."

On Miranda's words, Claire grit her teeth. She hated how she didn't have any words to return. Seeing Miranda's triumphant smile, Vera retreated from the area in haste.

Shannon tagged along to make a

quiet escape.

As Claire stood vexed, Zenoire came over with her fan.

“Oh my, the preparations aren’t getting anywhere. Are you slacking? Hey, are you slacking? This is why Counts in name alone are so troubling. Half-baked, and saved by the Walt House, yet they slack off on their work.”

Claire sent an irritated glare to Zenoire.

“... When you’ve nothing but history to you. With nothing but pride beyond your standing, you raised a rebellion and lost, didn’t you?”

“Oh how terrible. You’ve hurt me, deary. I think I’m going to go have

Lyle comfort me. Ah, more importantly, I have to go comfort pitiful Lyle who was thrown away by his parents."

"I'm sorry, that was out of line!"

Miranda thought as she looked over Zenoire and Claire's exchange.

(This is why that terrible custom gets passed down. I have to be careful myself.)

There, she sent a glance to Novem, who was silently preparing. For a while now, she had been silently working to perfection.

So perfect Claire was left unable to complain, to a level where Novem was the one eligible to find fault.

“Novem, you sure have it nice. Not getting dragged into these things.”

There, Novem turned her face to Miranda. And she spoke with a smile.

“That’s because you always have that cheeky look on your face, Miranda-san. Yet you act all cute when you’re in front of Lyle, of course they’d get irritated. Because you’re shady as all hell.”

... Miranda was at a loss for words. And as if to continue on, Novem spoke.

“And I’m just making things clear, so I’ll say it again.”

“... What?”

Miranda glared at her. Novem made a smile of leisure.

“I’m Lyle-sama’s number one. So you girls can all get along and scramble for his second place.”

Miranda and Novem smiled together.

“Don’t think your place will be stable forever. I’ll snatch it away anytime. So enjoy your number one seat while you can. For that’s all the time you’ll get.”

As if between the women... the atmosphere was as if a cheerful conversation was being carried out, but sparks were flying left and right...

Chapter 342: Ties

Looking around, whether alive or recalled from memory...

While the area had grown dark, today's moon was a pretty one. Fireworks had been prepared, but perhaps they would be unnecessary.

I looked around as I spoke.

"I can't tell which is which."

There were those who embraced one another in tears, and those that laughed together. Blowing away the rubble, Monica and the Valkyries hurriedly prepared for the banquet.

While we were proclaiming our

victory, this sort of phenomenon was breaking out in the other armies surrounding Centralle as well, putting them in a state of delight and confusion.

But we won... and we had proclaimed it was over.

The past king of Faunbeux looked at me in rage, apologized, said he was leaving Lianne to me, and returned to Faunbeux's main camp to clear his head.

Looking at the results alone, the surrounding armies contained the dead men that flooded out of the city, and my main force alongside another unit launched an attack on the capital... they did, but a majority of them were those of memory

brought back by my Skill
【Sevens】.

The ones who came to me desiring various explanations were General Blois, Baldoir and Maksim-san. Maksim-san was accompanied by a knight equipped in black armor. Was that the friend he spoke of? Right now, they were exchanging banter.

“What’s this, you still haven’t confessed? You’re the adjutant of an army so large. I don’t think you need to care about being a retainer anymore.”

In regards to the black knight who said that, Maksim-san seemed happy and sorrowful.

“That’s right. That’s exactly right... but you see, I... for now, I wanted to apologize to you. Back then, I wasn’t even able to rush to your aid.”

Seeing Maksim’san’s regret, the black knight laughed a bit.

“You’re as earnest as ever. But I’m glad you didn’t come. Looking back on it now, I can tell. Your judgement wasn’t mistaken. Leading Lady Adele away to join the anti-Celes coalition was the correct decision. So don’t cry over it. It’s unsightly to see a man like you cry.”

“I know that! But I have to say it. I was always... I’m sorry. I’m sorry!”

As Maksim-san cried, the black

knight lightly patted him on the back. There, on the prepared-in-a-jiff tables in front of us, food was brought out one dish after another.

Meat dishes were the main staple, and among them were some dishes that made use of the materials we'd brought here ourselves. Well, we had finished this campaign ahead of schedule. There was no problem in using them.

As I looked upon the scene, around me...

"What's this!? Over ten mistress candidates!? Just what did you lot do to get that way?"
"I'm surprised at that one too. Why did the numbers grow that much? Lyle's going to wither, dammit."

“No, I made a calculation error, you see. I thought he would be good for a few more, but with those members, it proved a bit harsh. Though I still think it’s going to increase.
“I’m more worried than jealous. Just as the Second said, he’s going to wither.”
“... The cause of his death’s definitely going to be women, no take-backs. Can’t laugh at that. And this is the founder of an empire.”
“So Lyle’s the same as me.”
“I’m sure he’s different from you, Sixth. Rather, the stares have been gathering for a while now, haven’t they? You don’t have to force yourself here.”

To the Seventh’s words, the Sixth cried out, “Don’t abandon me!” and

everyone laughed. For a while now, they had grown heated talking about me.

As that was going on, to our table came Aria, who was being worked hard carrying food around. Behind her was the form of the First's warrior wife.

... I've gotten around to thinking it. It's because this person was our founder's wife that a trend was set in all the wives to come. I think they could have gathered some more elegant women.

There, the First's wife spoke.

"Hey, quit making a ruckus and look over here. It looked like you were too embarrassed to strike up a

conversation so I brought her over. You better say it properly."

About what? It would be boorish to ask, I'm sure. The First's wife had brought Aria over, and it seems she knew a few things.

As the First stood, he came bashfully before her.

"Y-yo! You doing well, Aria-chan?"

Called out and put to work, Aria seemed troubled. Of all else, Aria had never met the First before.

There, the Fifth followed through.

"This old man's the founder of the Walt house. The Basil who comes out in the Lockwarde House's red gem story you spoke of. Aria... from

the time we met, he was always worried for you. So why not talk with him some?"

Aria still seemed troubled, but she nodded. She understood.

"Come to think of it, I get the feeling Lyle said something about that in Centralle... um, I'm Aria."

"N-name's Basil. Your ancestor was, well... huh? Hey, what's this about a red gem?"

The Third seemed somewhat excited.

"The truth is, Alice-san was interested in you as well. But since she couldn't express herself, she bought a red gem for you as a present. Yet she found she wasn't

even able to hand that one over, and it's been passed down through the Lockwarde House women for generations. It's amazing, founder. Just as you said, it really was fate."

The Third explained with a smile, but it's because he said it knowing full well that only added to his darkness. I think there are some things best left unknown.

"OOYYyyyyy!! Then, what's this!? If I had actually called out to her...!"

The Second seemed cold.

"The possibility was there. Possibility, that is."

I called over to Aria.

"Pour him some more ale. Even if

he's dressed like that, he's relatively delicate."

"I-I get it. But really, what's with this situation?"

Watching over Aria head to fill the First's glass was the man's wife. Touching a hand to her hip, she smiled a bit as she looked over him.

I called over to her.

"Um, are you alright with this?"

"I'm fine. He tried so hard when he was alive. Even if he's just a record or whatever, it shouldn't be bad if he gets some reward for it."

There, May who'd lost an arm accompanied Marina-san with some more ale. She waved her hand

at the Fifth, but her face was a bit red.

“Fredricks!”

“May!”

He instantly stood and headed over to her. He took her burden off her hands, and headed back over.

The Sixth made a conflicted expression at him. There, the warrior woman looked at Marina-san.

“Alright, you get over here too. I don’t know why, but I like you!”

“Hah? I’m going to go drinking. Don’t do any... wait what!? What’s with this physical strength! U-unhand me!”

Marina's strong arms were pulled away by the warrior, so I saw them off with a wave of my hand. There, the Second's wife came to our table.

"Now, everyone! I'm sure you're tired of all that thick seasoning, so I've made some dishes as well! Crassel, we've got your favorite soup too. Sleigh, when your big brother Dewey's helping out, are you sure you should be taking it easy over here?"

I noticed Dewey by her side. He had brought plates to distribute the food.

The Second seemed wary of the First's wife as he took the soup.

"Thanks, you're a lifesaver. It's

harsh with nothing but overpowering tastes. I did like this a lot."

The Third averted his eyes.

"There are things I want to talk about. Like teasing Lyle who I looked after a while, and teasing all the others. I mean, I'm the only one who died in battle and never got to enjoy life."

Dewey laughed.

"You worked real hard, Sleigh. Just sit back and relax."

After looking at that kind young boy, everyone's eyes gathered on the Third. The Third seemed troubled over what to say. He was sweating.

“... Dewey, you think you could leave your assistance at that? I can’t seem to sit still anymore.”

Following on, the Third’s wife brought food as well. Together with Vera.

“We’re not short on hands. You can just take it easy.”

Perhaps Vera had been apprehended as she looked over at me.

“I don’t really get it, but I’m helping out, so... see you later, Lyle.”

“Y-yeah.”

Looking over the women who returned with Dewey, I let out a sigh. The First alone was staring

into his cup of ale and grinning. I was jealous of his simplicity.

The Fourth removed his glasses and wiped them with a cloth. It was the same scene I'd seen so often in the Jewel.

"But I'm glad our family was the only one to see it. If the others watched, it would just look as if something came out after you won, and the last part was just a lover's spat. In the end, I'm sure the taking down of that dragon will be written off as the conclusion."

Legend Dragon... as a fearsome monster who stood in the path of our victory, that was decidedly how the story would be told. I was just a little relieved. After the Legend

Dragon was abused so badly, I at least wanted its name to remain in history as a powerful foe.

I saw a small woman running up with golden scales in her hands. Behind her were the Fifth's wives, and a crowd of men and women. They were the Fifth's children.

Milleia-san was among them. While complaints came in from her sisters around her, she made a refreshing face.

"She's feigning innocence again."
"Show off your true nature, witch."
"What could you be talking about? Ah, Lyle~, you sure worked hard!"

She looked at me and waved her hand. And the small woman- the

Fourth's wife- looked at me as well.

"Lyle! Look! Look at this! They're that dragon's scales, but they're definitely amazing materials! They grew back, so we got them in considerable numbers! We should carefully preserve one dragon's worth of them, and conduct research with the rest. And... let a few of them flow elsewhere. Then the world will understand their worth, and this material's value will rise as a rare material. I doubt anyone's getting their hands on any soon."

Fitting of the Fourth's wife, she was quite shrewd when it came to money. The Fourth grinned as he watched over her carrying the scales so preciously. This was a

couple with a thing for shiny objects.

And the Fifth's children surrounded me.

"So this is the heir of the main line."
"What's this, he looked unreliable."
"Well, isn't it fine? And it seems he's becoming emperor."
"You'd better promote our grand and great grandchildren."
"I'm really sorry you had to deal with Milleia. She's just terrible, isn't she?"

My surroundings grew rowdy. And to the Fifth who had May sit next to him, the eyes gathered as well.

"Dad, at the end of the end, do

something about that animal obsession of yours."

A voice representative of his children. As I looked to the Fifth, before I noticed it, the animals he kept were by his side as well. Surrounded by their fluff, he seemed to be in heaven.

"I refuse."

An instant reply. Around him, perhaps his wives had come with food and ale, as they lined themselves up.

"Good grief, he never changes."

Hearing that, the Fifth's face turned red as he looked away. In contrast, looking around the Sixth.

“Did you hear? It seems he’s gotten over a dozen great grandchildren. Brod, you say something too.”
“Whose influence do you think that was?”
“Fiennes... won’t you look at your mother?”

They directed some incessant attacks at him. His contrast with the Fifth was too great. Why did it come to this... I think he’s just getting his just deserts.

There, grandma Zenoire came over to the Seventh, leading my father and mother behind her.

“Oh, so you’re here?”

“I brought them. The Eighth Generation couple that screwed up

big time. Lyle, get over here."

I didn't know what to feel, seeing my father and mother worked so hard by the others. I did think to save them, but the two of them didn't wish for it.

As I headed for my parents before everyone, they were crying. My father hid his eyes with his hand.

"... I'm sorry. I've caused you some trouble, Lyle."

Even if he said that in an apron... well, I didn't hate him at this point, and I directed a smile.

"That's alright. I know your reasons. So I'm fine. Both of you, have some peace."

My mother looked at me, gripping her skirt in both hands, and letting large tears fall. While the two of them had come out, Celes hadn't appeared. I'm sure she truly did hate me.

"I'm sorry. For being a no-good parent... a no-good mother, I'm sorry."

As the two embraced me, my tears came out as well. Looking around, my comrades had gathered. Baldoir and Beil... the knights I admired were lined up, looking upon me.

"Lyle-sama, I'm happy for you."

"... It's something that would never come to pass while they were alive. But if they were alive, the young

master... no, Lyle would only be in more pain."

And General Blois stood.

"I'm going to get the details together and inform the surrounding armies. Well, I won't tell them the truth. It seems a legend really was involved. It's almost like I was seeing a dream. And we need some people to look out for whether there's any army plotting something strange."

With those words he walked off. He really was a reliable one.

Right, a dream. This was an illusion. An illusion my Skill produced. But...

When I looked to the Jewel, it's light had grown even dimmer.

The First hit his hands together.

“All of you, line up! Is the ale all poured? The food all out? Then cheers!”

The Seventh looked at me with worry.

“Lyle, are you sure you shouldn’t settle for tea or something?”

Even I could tell this wasn’t the sort of atmosphere for that.

“I’ll settle for ale. Well, I’ve grown stronger than before.”

By the time I returned to my seat, starting with Novem, everyone had gathered. It seems the First was leading them. Looking around, a many groups of knights and

soldiers had been formed with food and drink before them. Among them were some who had already started into it.

No, perhaps our group really was the last

“Ehem~ well then… what shall we toast to? Lyle’s victory? Or perhaps…”

The Third grinned.

“I’m sure Lyle’s got a lot to toast, his wedding and victory among other things, but here, let’s make it a toast to Lyle. The wonder child of the Walt House. It will be difficult for a talent surpassing his to come out.”

In what sense? Well, it was the

Third, so I'm sure he meant mr. lyle.

Perplexed as he was, the Second agreed.

"That's right. Let's raise a glass to Lyle."

The Fourth put on his glasses.

"That's right. You stood firm. Truly..."

The Fifth gave a rare smile.

"Right. Perhaps it's just because I watched you along the way, but I'll say you worked hard. Lyle, you really did your best."

The Sixth seemed a bit unsatisfied.

“I wanted to teach you how to play around more. Lyle, you’ve got to learn to lay loose.”

The Seventh looked at me and nodded.

“As I thought, you’re my prided grandson. Now, Lyle.”

The First held up his glass, and everyone followed suite. Novem brought me a glass of ale. As I accepted it, I felt a little embarrassed. Novem looked at that and smiled.

“Then to Lyle Walt... Cheers!!”

Everyone cried out a ‘Cheers’ and drained their glasses. I chugged mine down in one go... perhaps Novem was being tactful as she had

watered it down significantly. It was easier to drink, but...

"... Urp."

I sat down as if collapsing. And my surroundings were enveloped in a blue light. That blue glimmer dissolved into grains, glimmering as it rose into the sky. As I looked upon the scene, my tears flowed. They had welled up, and they weren't stopping.

It wasn't only in Centralle. From around it, blue lights rose as well. Looking up at the sky, the moon was stunning. And those lights that rose as if to greet it.

I could hear the sound of cups being set down around.

And what I heard at the end.

... You did well, Lyle...

Those words alone. I put down my glass and covered my face with my right hand. The people who had watched over me all the way. And the great many who had saved me.

I'm sure I was here because those people were with me. There were so many people involved, and then there was me. And I'm sure I'd continue on... and become one of them someday.

And carrying on from them, I'd entrust to the next generation...

I heard footsteps approach. It was Novem.

“Lyle-sama. Everyone’s already...”

I frantically held back my tears; the light completely out of sight, I hung my head and gripped the Jewel. It didn’t feel the same as it had before. I had the feeling its light had gone away. It had returned to being a normal gem. Preciously gripping that gem in both my hands, I leaked some sobs.

“I... know, so... I’m sorry, just for now... I’m sorry. I’m the same crybaby I always was.”

Miranda and Shannon pat my back. Aria brought me a towel. May was looking up at the sky. She was crying. Vera issued orders around for everyone to stay put.

Monica carefully collected the cups. Clara helped out, and while Ludmilla, Gracia and Elza made tired faces, they seemed somewhat lonely as they looked around.

Eva took a sip of ale, and sang a song for me. A sorrowful song of parting. But a song that ended in new encounters.

That's right.

The time had come for me to move forward. To stand on my own.

So as not to be embarrassed. I'll live so I, who carries the blood of those people, will never feel ashamed. Stick out my chest, and live so I can say I did well at the end.

That's why, just for now... isn't it

alright if I cry? I'll stand up again and face forward in no time. So just for now...

"Lyle-sama, it's alright. Those around are crying as well. And the Valkyries are surrounding us, so... you can cry as much as you want."

Crying like a child, being comforted by the women around me. Yet even so, my tears wouldn't stop.

Chapter 343: A Blue Gem to my Heart

... South Beim.

A while after noon had passed, Erhart dropped by the Guild. He had finished the request he'd taken on, and came back to report it.

His request was a patrol of the city's perimeter. A majority of the soldiers were out of town. For that sake, to supplement their lack of personnel, the requests were put out to the city's adventurers'.

Rühe was the one manning the

counter. When she spotted Erhart, she waved her hand.

“Good work out there.”

“Yeah, all wrapped up. Rather, have you got any new info? It’s been quite a while since they set out, but I haven’t even heard any rumors.”

Rumors... naturally about the war in Centralle. While there were unfounded rumors circulating about, nothing certain had reached Erhart’s ears.

It’s not as if he was particularly good at gathering information to begin with. One of his party members was specialized in gathering that sort of information.

But even that member had yet to

obtain anything definitive. Was the war still going on? Or was it won? Lost? Erhart couldn't help but be curious.

"We haven't gotten any information in. The Valkyries, was it? They were all gathered up, so we have no means of communication, it seems."

Erhart handed the paperwork over, touching a hand to his chin.

"I see. Well, perhaps it isn't something that will end so easily, but you can't help but wonder."

A battle to decide the fate of the continent... so it was called. But as a practical problem, it was a war in some distant land.

While those around were curious, they got on with their lives.

As Rühe and Erhart spoke, Marianne rushed into the guild. She was short on breath, gathering the eyes of the receptionists and adventurers in the branch.

Marianne collected herself before declaring with a smile.

“They won! It was the alliance’s victory. The Bahnseim Kingdom was taken down! A portion of the army has returned, you see. So the information was finally able to reach us! The main force has already reached Rhuvenns.”

Hearing that, the atmosphere in the guild brightened up all at once.

Erhart reached out and embraced Rühe. Surprised as she was, with the surrounding atmosphere, she hugged back and rejoiced along with him.

And Marianne looked upon it with delight...

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... In Rhuvenns castle, a single Valkyrie came to Lianne.

It wasn't unit Thirty Four.

While her black hair and face were the same, her hairstyle, and the subtle difference in her clothing

was enough for Lianne to understand the difference.

Unit Thirty Four didn't come to meet her. And with a Valkyrie holding a crate and letter coming to see her, she had realized.

Lianne stood from her chair, walking her way to the Valkyrie. She took the box and letter.

But the letter was something from her home of Faunbeux. Putting the letter off to later, she opened the box. In it was a single pink, knit string. Lianne's present.

"... There's no meaning in returning if that's all that's left of you. That child was foolish to the end."

The Valkyrie's sister nodded.

“Yes, she was a fool. But she fulfilled her duty. Please praise her. And that is all she held onto so dearly. I am sure she did not want it to burn out alongside her. She left her final words... ‘I have an outfit prepared for your chick. Please check the dresser’ she said.”

Lianne laughed. Laughed, and at the sheer ridiculousness, she held her stomach with both hands. And she approached the dresser Unit Thirty Four presumably stowed it in and opened it.

In it, from baby to child, various outfits were prepared.

“She was truly a fool... thinking nothing but of what was to come...”

Lianne's tears stained one of the garments. As she wiped them, she opened the letter from Faunbeux. It contained words of worry for their daughter

At the same time it was written that Novem was decided as the legal wife. Lianne smiled.

The Valkyrie seemed worried for her.

"You must not fall to despair. And Unit Thirty Four wouldn't want..."

"... Despair? I've no time for such a thing. And I've received that child's last words. Well, while I've had the seat of legal wife snatched up from under me, I'm still one of the mistresses. The probability of

overturning things from this point isn't zero. I think I'll be making for Centralle with haste."

The Valkyrie spoke.

"The outfits are prepared, was enough of a message?"

Lianne wiped her tears, speaking as she turned back to the Valkyrie.

"Yes, she wanted to see the face of my child. Soon, a baby... a chick's face, is her demand. That girl won't be able to see it. But you lot want to see too, don't you?"

There, the Vallkyrie before her eyes corrected her posture.

"... I am Unit Seventy One. I belong to the faction that supports you.

Please let me share in that duty!”

Click! As her expression changed, Lianne smiled.

“I see. It’s a pleasure to work with you, Unit Seventy One. Now then, first off, we must make arrangements to transport this dresser. Carry it with care. And then the preparations to head for Centralle...”

“About that, Centralle has become a mountain of rubble. The mobile fortress was destroyed as well, so there is a need to construct a new capital. The location has already been decided.”

Lianne let out a sigh. She had no time to feel sad.

“How much do they think that fortress of their cost? Well, if they won, then so be it. We can go collect it up whenever we want. Then we’ll head there after some preparations. It’s going to be busy. But... a new capital, is it? That sounds interesting enough.”

As Lianne showed off her will, her fighting spirit against Novem quietly blazed up.

“And perhaps it’s a good thing to seriously vie for his favor. Because I want to have a child soon.”

The Valkyrie gave a firm nod...

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... North Beim. Adele's office.

Receiving the victory report, and the documents explaining the situation, Adele held her head.

"Centralle is a mountain of rubble... The mobile fortress was blown away and suffered severe damage. Why did it come to this... the Capital of Centralle was a historic site! And the cost of that fortress was ridiculously high! That's why I never wanted that weapon!"

Before Adele's teary eyes, a Valkyrie stood quite unmotivated. Adele wasn't Lyle's wife. Meaning she wouldn't have Lyle's children.

As a result, she was low on the

Valkyrie's order of precedence. As the Valkyrie tickled the tips of her long black hair with her fingertips, she let out a sigh.

"... More importantly, could you start preparing soon? They are lacking in officers, so they said to call Adele-san over."

Adele lowered her hands on her own desk a few times, hard enough to make banging sounds.

"What's with that attitude!? And the train of thought that, 'everything's fine as long as you win' is absurd! He should've tried for a victory with fewer casualties, you see, and..."

"Ah, that one was impossible. Well,

I have the report here on the matter, so please give it a read."

What the Valkyrie pulled from her bag was a report of the event. Each sheet of paper packed to the brim with lettering barely a legible size.

And the amount of papers was nothing to laugh out.

"... Can you summarize it?"

The Valkyrie seemed unmotivated.

"We beat Celes. Agrissa popped out and lost to Novem. Novem was confessed to by master, and gave up. Over. Ah, something about a golden dragon being the ringleader or something, it seems we're supposed to say it was a formidable foe."

Adele slammed her desk a few more times.

“A bit more detailed if you will! Even if you tell me that, I don’t feel any more enlightened!”

The Valkyrie raised an, ‘Eh~,’ in true reluctance…

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“City development? How could one call themselves a maid if they couldn’t do that much? From deciding the location to drafting the blueprints, just leave it to this Monica. I’ll prepare a city worthy of a useless damn chicken…”

“I’m, you see, to be quite honest, I’d be fine with focusing on practicality. But you know, I think shabby is something else, and a majestic feel would be nice. See, I know gold is a bit hard on our budget, but if it looks extravagant, then maybe it’s for the best.”

There were numerous tents put up around. As we went out and surrounded a large table, we discussed the city we would build on the point Monica designated.

While Monica continued joking around, the place she chose was certainly a worthy spot for a city. If I had to say a problem, the preliminary work and foundations would be a pain.

Flood control, and this and that... there was a reason a city had never been placed there before. But in a sense, we had a gathering of specialists here.

Novem looked at me and nodded.

“Not only for your time, let’s make a plan with future development in mind. For that sake, the foundations are important. Leave it to me. While I’ve lost a large majority of my power, this Novem will give you a city as a present...”

“That sort of thing’s no good, right? We’ve got plenty of soldiers, and we just have to give them some work. See, the other armies have already gone home, and carrying a few hundred thousand would be harsh

for us."

As Novem said something similar to Septem who cared too much and ruined people, Miranda looked and laughed. Novem gave a purposeful clearing of her throat.

"You've got to properly have the post-war on your mind, right~. While we've got food problems, keeping soldiers without work is difficult. But that sparkly dragon–"

"Legend Dragon."

As I gave her the precise name, Miranda corrected herself. He was so pitiful, I at least wanted his name properly remembered. For argument's sake, he had been placed as the final formidable foe to

stand against us in this conquest.

“Yeah, the Legend Dragon’s magic stones and materials have some time left to go before the world knows their value, so there’s a money problem too.”

Damien pushed his glasses up with his fingertip.

“I do think they’re amazing as materials. But it’ll be a while until we hit on how to use them.”

Old Letarta looked over a portion of the materials we had collected.

“... Honestly, when only one of them came out, why do you have so many materials? There’s enough for three or four whole dragons, you know? Well, leave them with us a while,

and me and Damien will tell you what they're best suited for."

I couldn't feel much motivation from Damien.

"You know, for me, this lost time is a waste. When I'm supposed to be pursuing my ideal woman, why do I have to involve myself with city development in a place like this?"

I, in regards to him.

"Because a portion of the materials we're disseminating are going to become your research funds. You'd better find a use for them that'll have people buying them at a high price."

Damien smiled.

“Leave it to me. It’s for my funds. That’s an important problem for me!”

As I explained things away, I looked at the sky. Today’s weather was nice.

I absentmindedly reached my right hand to the Jewel and gripped it, but there was no response. It seems it really had just returned to being a blue gem.

Would it be restored as a Jewel again someday? Or perhaps, would it continue its existence as a gem evermore?

... It’s no good. I still had the feeling I’d hear my ancestors’ voices from somewhere.

There, Shannon looked at me.

“Lyle, you look lonely. Oh, even if you say I’m wrong, the almighty Shannon sees right through you. For these eyes I inherited from my great grandmother Milleia can see through all in existence!”

Seeing her firmly strike a pose, I laughed. I didn’t have the time for sorrow. The time everything was over was the time I died.

Until then, I had to keep walking. I had to keep pressing forwards.

“Well, let’s set a firm foundation for our new capital. It’s for the future. After that... we just have to tack on sufficient functionality. I want to have it in some shape by the end of

spring so we can declare the founding of our nation."

I still couldn't let my guard down. Perhaps some army would aim for this time and attack. I want to believe there are no idiots, but I can't laugh if I get struck down by an idiot.

Monica looked over at me.

"Oh, Chicken Dickwad. Lianne-san in Rhuvenns says she'll bring over the necessary tools and materials to set up a new city. That's good. It seems she's trying to sell a favor now that the legal wife's been decided."

Monica grinned.

I averted my face. When the topic

of legal wife came up... well, it was really empress... everyone's eyes would gather on Novem.

Touching a hand to her face, tilting her head a bit, Novem sent a provocative glance around. Miranda reacted at once, so I worked with Shannon to break things up.

"Hey! Aren't you going to do something about this!?"

"Foolish little girl! All I can do is to be watchful and make sure everyone doesn't explode. It's not my problem what happens once they've already blown up! I'm a man who doesn't fight without any prospects of victory!"

As Shannon ran away with me, we

found Aria and Eva on our path. As I thought it was a strange pairing, the two of them spoke on.

It seemed to be a serious talk, so I peered in on them from the shadows.

“The First’s wife? Well, she was an amazing person.”

“A little more detail on that! Please, I have an obligation to get a song of his clan together. Now that I’ve witnessed it, I’ve realized. The Walt House is a blast! So I need to know more! Good grief, Lyle should have opened up to me on these things sooner.”

It does seem she was seriously looking into my clan. When the elf

who was prone to exaggerate and ad lib looked into things so seriously, it was a little scary.

There, Shannon hiding beside me spoke.

“Come to think of it, Clara seemed to be thinking about something real seriously as well.”

Clara was making her move. When I thought of that, it really put a load on my mind. Clara and Eva, I could only hope their strange rivalry didn’t blaze up.

There, Shannon looked at me.

“You sure have it hard. With so many wives. And you’ll get more, won’t you? Well, just do your best. Ah, I’m also your wife, but as long

as I can take it easy every day, I don't have any other complaints."

I pinched Shannon's cheek.

"Oy, I don't mind arranging the latter half for you, but what was that about having more!?"

Shannon wriggled to get her cheek out of my right hand.

"I-I mean! Everyone was talking about how they wouldn't be able to oppose Novem alone! Ludmilla made contact with the King of Djanpear, and the others are probing for allies, so I thought you would know..."

I released Shannon's face, unsteadily tottering backwards.

“T-this can’t be. Even now, I have over ten, you know. Are you stupid!? You really are! You guys actually hate me, don’t you.”

There, Shannon gave a grin.

“So you finally noticed? Right... what we’re really aiming for is the weakened form of your psyche chipping away!”

“A-as I thought! Little girl, so you hated me that much!”

As we made a ruckus, Vera came over to us. Even hearing Shannon’s conversation with me, she didn’t seem surprised.

“You two sure get along. And I’ll be returning temporarily, so could you lend me Clara? I have to transport

some goods, and I'd like to use Clara's transport corps."

I turned to Vera.

"As long as you'll leave half behind. We have to use them over here as well. But in that case, it really is painful that Porter's gone."

Thinking about movement speed alone, Porter was exceptionally fast. With special tires and wheels, Porter with its Magic Ore and motion engine... we had lost a precious comrade.

Shannon was moved to tears too.

"Uuuuurh, Porter... the comfort of your loading tray shall be missed."

Right now, we were carrying on

with a life in the tents. I also yearned for Porter's loading tray. Vera looked over our sorrow.

"... Well, it was an existence like a partner that accompanied you so long, right? Like my ship to me? I'll be returning once, so is there anything you want?"

It came to me. I turned a smile to Vera.

"I'd like some kindness!"

I said. I had some terrible wives plotting to increase my number of wives. I think it's alright if I seek some kindness. There, Vera began thinking with a serious look on her face.

"Kindness... you mean

broadmindedness? You mean if it's that sort of woman, you'll accept them?"

"... Eh?"

As I panicked, Vera explained.

"Ah, not me. I'm not for it at all, but if you're officially putting the Guild under state management, then they said they'd best send someone over to you. See, your impression as a womanizer is really strong there, and..."

It's a misunderstanding. A complete misunderstanding. I have a lot of woman around me. I definitely do, but I get the feeling the world's impression of me is growing further and further apart from who I am.

“... Push talks towards rejection.”

Vera nodded.

“Got it. I’ll tell my father that too. Then I’ll be deciding your souvenir on my own, so have some high hopes.”

As Vera went away, Shannon pinched my trousers and tugged at them.

“What is it?”

“You’re definitely in for something terrible. If you don’t properly tell everyone while you have the chance, it will be too late for you to take back.”

I thought so too. As I gripped the Jewel, it felt almost as if I could

hear voices fed-up at, yet enjoying this situation.

“I know. I’ll tell them at once. Let’s go back.”

“Eh? I don’t want to. Go back alone.”

I dragged Shannon with a smile as I headed to the battlefield of Novem and Miranda.

Epilogue: First Half

... What was passed down in the world to come as the start of the empire.

It was recorded in the books, and passed down in the songs.

There was a single large country.

Over its long years of rule, its politics faced corruption, and its nobles grew too prideful in their bearing. In fact, from records of the time, numerous documents have been found that detailed events as if they weren't giving any thought to their people at all. Impossible enlistments on top of a willing shortage of food.

An oppression of feudal lords who voiced out against this superpower. In only a few years, it has been the deaths of several million were recorded. Counting secondary casualties, many historians have calculated this reign to have led to the deaths of over one hundred millions people.

The one who stood against that country was the legitimate child of the Walt House, an influential noble house of the time. Expelled from his house, he drifted to Beim, where he built up power, and appealed to the various surrounding countries for the formation of an alliance.

That was the first emperor, the 【God Emperor Lyle】.

Some say he was loved by the Goddesses, while others say he cut them down in his wake, the records of the time showed such an unprecedented nature that many question their validity.

Putting the phrase, the Hero gets the Girl, into actual practice, it has been said by the time he reached the throne, his mistresses numbered twenty five.

He travelled the continent in his youth, and many songs remain of his various encounters with women across the lands. Many voices claim it was that unheard-of behavior that caused his expulsion from his house in the first place.

These stories of the first emperor

have been changed in name to appear as heroic tales time and again.

In order to save the woman he loved, the crybaby noble heir who took a stand.

The Holy Knight who saved the holy maiden.

The adventurer who stood against the army of monsters.

All these fairy tales derive their origin from the legends of the first emperor.

The reason these tales spread and flourish is likely because when it came to heroic songs of the time, songs of the first emperor were the popular trend.

The first emperor had a popular elf minstrel as one of his mistresses, so it is thought that this was a political plan he devised to spread his authority.

And like this, the first emperor's name remains from the strangely abundant materials on the time. High in historic value, and easy to research... they even serve as reference for the highly-popular period of the empire's collapse and warring states period to follow.

The descendants of the heroes who performed in this period of war were often likened to the emperor and those around him, some even falsely claiming to be his descendants in order to increase their authority.

That's just how influential the first emperor's name was at the time.

This also owes to the fact that the first emperor... in contrast to his personality, had future public order on his mind. Or perhaps he had someone to give him advice, as he made a new system of rule and even the succession of rule.

Numerous documents remain on his preparations to leave matters to future generations, and he showed a proficient side as a statesman.

But because of that, it is also true the other emperors of history festered a desire to leave their names in history as the first emperor had.

The reason his name came out in the warring period far after his death was because it was so hard for the other emperors of the great empire to stand out.

While he left numerous documents, as there are also numerous unrealistic records, it was an era one may regard as myth, but the fact the great empire ruled over the continent is an undisputed fact...

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“Hey, we aren’t going to make it in time!”

As my surroundings were busily

moving around, I took the blueprints in hand to verify their progress. The development of our planned capital was behind schedule, what's more, the plan was already entering spring. No, it was almost into summer. No, no, that's already fall! Or so an exhausting period of delay after delay.

It could be said this was because we were being careful in constructing the foundations. Naturally, as the imperial capital, my palace as an emperor would be there.

In an attempt to make it something never seen before, the plans were revised. In truth, the foundations of the palace were already completed. No, the foundations as a whole were gone and done with.

But the city scape and districts.

Thinking of the future developmental plans, and its present state... opinions were all over the place.

Monica wore a helmet as she waited to my side. In this sullying worksite, she wore her maid uniform as if to show it off, yet no one chastised her for it.

I'm sure everyone already thought there was no helping Monica.

Novem let out a sigh.

"When the palace's layout is one never seen before, it won't be interesting at all if the cityscape is just the normal, over-used formula. At the very least, let's decide things

once the palace is in a more-complete state."

Adele complained at Novem. I had pulled her here from North Beim, but when I left development of the new city to her, she seemed quite eager.

No, she couldn't help but be.

"Please get all your opinions together before you bring them to me! Why do I keep getting requests of, 'as I thought, keep it toned down and make the city scape as it usually would be'! Or 'if you're constructing a temple, then something like Zayin's would be nice'! What exactly do you want me to do!? Hey, what should I do!?"

In regards to Adele, Novem sent a smile.

“Just ignore those other opinions. This is the start of a new country. We should change up the atmosphere a bit, should we not? And there won’t be any change in the fundamental structures. You have to start the plan forward at once.”

The ones who looked way too fitting to wear tank tops as they worked, Maksim-san, Aria and Marina-san came over to me.

Maksim-san offered me a proposal.

“Lyle-dono. No, your majesty... we’re lacking in materials. Um, the castle, or rather royal palace, I think

you should revise that one a bit."

There, Miranda rejected the notion.

"That's no good. You're going to greet the representatives of other countries in a compromise palace? Even if we have to push it, we must show our leisure, and let them know that the war is over."

I did understand Miranda's outlook, but we didn't have the materials. With the foundation complete, we were going to erect buildings of vermillion over the set stone. There were a bit too many problems with the plans, but only here were the opinions beginning to diverge.

I spoke to Maksim-san and the others.

“Understood. For now, please proceed with work on a different district. Ah, after you get some rest.”

Marina-san seemed displeased, but she quietly obeyed.

Meanwhile, Aria.

“... Hey, isn’t my treatment here becoming real crude? For some reason, day by day, I feel as if you’re treating me not as a mistress, but as some sort of site supervisor, you know? You know!?”

She really fit the role, so there was no helping it. And she had gotten in various sorts of experience in our adventurer days, and I knew I could leave this sort of thing to her.

I smiled.

“Do your best.”

As I said that, my shoulders were gripped, and I was shaken back and forth. How nostalgic. Back when we first met, it was this sort of shaking that had rendered me unconscious.

To such a place, came Balroir and Alette-san.

Baldoir had been entrusted the security of the area, so he didn’t usually come to where the work took place. As I thought something had happened, Baldoir made a serious face.

“What’s wrong?”

“Lyle-sama, a letter from Lorphys.

This makes the fifth one."

As I took the letter from his irritated hands, Alette-san touched the fingertips of both her hands together as she tried to make herself scarce.

"I have it rough being stuck between a rock and hard place. The top told me, mistress is fine, so just beg your husband and stick her in there somewhere."

By the contents, the Royal Princess of Lorphys Annerinne had sent a request regarding a marriage to me.

I spoke with a smile.

"Rejected! Totally rejected! Not happening. Definitely impossible!"

There, Novem took the letter from me and read over its contents.

“She never learns. When the number of mistresses already exceeds twenty, I’m worried for Lyle-sama’s body.”

Miranda looked at Novem with a smile.

“Or you could just disappear and it’ll all go away.”

Novem smiled too.

“I’ll have to refuse.”

Baldoir spoke to Alette-san in irritation.

“In the first place, the Walt House has precepts it has carried on for

generations! Welcoming in someone who doesn't even clear that is completely unacceptable!"

... I'm sure it's because people like Baldoir were there, that the ancestors went through so much trouble. Well, it became a reason to deny the expansion of my continually growing number of wives, so I've no mind to refute it.

First, thank you. It's because of you that I've found salvation. I thought you were an idiot for leaving those idiotic precepts behind, but now I can honestly give you my thanks.

Alette-san clung onto Baldoir in tears.

"Can't you think of it as a request

from your wife!? Annerinne-sama's appearance isn't bad! Her pedigree is definite, so I think she'll be perfectly fine with magic! Her skin's nice, and she's never been sick before! Though it's often been said she's contracted the sickness of love."

There, Baldoir narrowed her eyes.

"Then what of her head? From my first impression of her, I didn't think she passed the criteria."

You're all way too harsh. Well, rather than intellect, I think there's a bit of a problem with her personality. Since I saw the instant her love died before my very eyes, to be totally honest, I'm a bit...

Alette-san's eyes were teary.

"H-her head is... her head is... b-but you have other no-good mistresses, don't you!? L-like Shannon-chan. She's definitely cute! She's cute, but that's the useless sort of cuteness!"

There, Baldoir shook his head to the side.

"You're talking of Shannon-sama, who supported up Lyle-sama from his troubled adventurer days. Even if there are some problems, more or less, we vassals recognize her inclusion among the mistresses, and rejoice over it."

Seriously, what are you peoples' standards? Hey, could it be the Walt House's vassals actually hate the

Walt House?

As Alette-san cried, Baldoir held her tight.

“I’m sorry. But I’m a former knight of the Walt House. And now, as commander of the imperial guard, I can’t let this come to pass. You understand, don’t you Alette?”

“Y-yeah.”

While everyone around’s so busy, he sure knows his work. Well, as long as this pulls Alette-san out of the matter, there’s no problem... Gracia’s little brother Leold-kun doesn’t have a partner yet, does he? But they’re both heirs to their lines. This is difficult.

There, this time Rauno came, out of

breath.

“O-oy. I looked into it.”

“How was it!?”

As I rushed towards Rauno, he took the canteen Monica held out and swallowed down some water.

He drank with good force, and after wiping his mouth with a sleeve, he gave a report.

“Everywhere’s not working out. Even if fall passes by, the reality’s that it will be difficult for anyone to move at once. In the current dubious situation, they’re doing their best to not show any openings. Even if you call them over, there are few able to mobilize. H-hey, can I go home yet? I haven’t

had any decent conversations with Innis lately."

"I'm sorry. This is your next mission."

Hearing that, I was relieved. And handing the next document over to him, I left him the work. As a majority of all intel work fell to Rauno, he was considerably busy.

"... I was too hasty in my government appointment."

A depressed Rauno. But the information I had him look into was beneficial. I was able to understand the present state of surrounding countries.

"But no one can move? I get the feeling they're ready to send envoys

whenever they want, though."

I planned to call the surrounding countries in, and make a grand proclamation of my enthronement as emperor. If you've any objections, come at me, was the message. If they were actually prepared for it, that would be most troublesome.

Rauno wiped his sweat.

"In essence, the countries that participated in the alliance have suffered massive casualties. More than anything, they're afraid of your majesty who won his way through such a battle. But they won't show such an attitude. So they're putting on airs. There are plenty of folks with complaints, but it doesn't look

like they'll voice them. If anyone moves, it'll be the next generation, or the one after that..."

The next generation.

As a problem of my successors entered the stage, Monica seemed restless.

"W-what's this!? That's a serious affair for the chicks! Understood. This Monica shall protect a damn chicken's chicks from whatever crisis they face. So in concerns to that, leave the rights to their education and care to me. To Monica!"

The one who kicked her out of the way from behind was Valkyrie Unit Seventy One. As she fastened her

hair with a pink ribbon, she was easy to distinguish.

“You fiend! We are the ones who shall raise Lianne-sama’s chick! One who breaks their vows has no right to embrace any chick of his! … Are you not the one who said it?”

“I mean… I mean, the chicks are my dream!”

Monica made a mortified face. The usual skit had started up, so I opted to return to my work.

“Then let’s negotiate, and change the date of my enthronement. If the day is bad, or for whatever reason, we have to make our opponents recognize it. Even if they hate it, they should jump on board! Adele-

san!”

Adele-san fled with teary eyes.

“You can leave negotiations to Lianne-san! I don’t want any more work~!”

“No, Lianne’s on another matter, and she isn’t here... ah, she can’t hear me anymore.”

As Adele-san ran off into the distance, Maksim-san’s face flushed.

“Adele-sama’s cute today too.”

Kuh! Is there no decent folk around me? Here, I need to keep firm as the normal one.

“More importantly, Lyle.”

Miranda looked at me. Her expression was relatively serious.

“Yes?”

“Who’s room are you going to stop by today? You’ve already resolved yourself, haven’t you? And yet, what’s the meaning of not stopping by my room once?”

The surroundings instantly grew quiet. I broke into cold sweat as I looked at Novem, only to find her making some bashful gestures.

“Um, I’m also waiting. Do with me as you will.”

Hearing that, Miranda’s eyebrows twitched. There, May unsteadily made her way over to me.

“Hey, Lyle. Give me your seed already. It’s about time for me to get a family of my own. My mother’s urging me on it, see. But I’ve already decided on a name. I’m shortening Fredricks, and making it Fraisse.”

May lightly joined in. I looked at Aria. But Aria sighed and shook her head.

“Decide on your own. It’s your choice.”

Aria wouldn’t intervene. So she wouldn’t assertively press me either. I’m thankful. I’m thankful, but...

“... I have some business to attend to.”

... I ran off. Strings tangled around my leg, tripping me up.

“L-let me go!”

Dragged by Miranda’s threads, I returned being dragged back towards everyone. I resisted, but Maksim-san and Baldoir also took part to bring me back.

“That’s no good, Lyle-dono. If you don’t properly do it, the bets will never be called.”

“Maksim-dono, please don’t use Lyle-sama to gamble. But it’s true you need to get some heirs. Lyle-sama, this is for the sake of the House. No, the sake of the country.”

Dragged by the two of them, I was led before Novem and Miranda, and

Aria and May.

Stop it. There's no mood here to be found! Don't be misled just because I confessed in front of several hundred thousand. Have a bit of tact for my delicate heart.

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... Watching the rowdy scene from a little away were Shannon and Clara.

Shannon was scribbling in her illustrated diary that had begun to fill itself out. Clara looked at the picture in surprise.

"You're quite skilled. Are you sure

you can't see?"

Shannon showed Clara her special brush.

"If I paint with this, even I can see it. And I can draw for real too, though I have to borrow someone else's field of vision."

Where she pointed with her brush, was a Valkyrie with eyes set on the scenery Shannon painted.

Clara marveled at Shannon's surprising talent as she looked through the diary.

"Perhaps this will become a valuable resource."

Shannon laughed.

“It’s just a sketchbook. And I’m only writing what happened on what day.”

There, Eva came over to the two of them. The reason she was so far from the worksite was because she didn’t want the smoke and dust to damage her throat.

“What are you two doing? Oh, you’re quite skilled. At that level, you could draw a billboard for my stage. Want to have a go?”

In regards to Eva’s tone, Clara seemed a bit irritated.

“It seems you’re misunderstanding something. What’s going to be constructed first is the library this city really needs, and not some

theater playhouse, you know?”

Eva stuck out her tongue.

“How unfortunate. I already have a promise with Lyle. When he confesses to me, it will be in a completed theater before a full house, he promised!”

Clara raised a dry laugh.

“Of course that was a joke. You really are an easy elf. You really make me wonder, sometimes.”

The Valkyrie watched the feud between the two. Shannon added the scene to her diary. Because she thought it was interesting...

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... The most valuable material on the early days of the great empire's founding came from 【Shannon's Illustrated Diary】.

She used paints rare for the era, and without deteriorating over time, they remained in a beautifully preserved state.

While it's said she was one of the mistresses, from the contents of the diary, it is inferred she was quite close to the first emperor Lyle. She left material of before the empire's founding, but they mostly consisted of crude letters and painting. After the birth of the empire, her works

grew to a level of artistic value, and even now, entries of her diary are displayed in museums across the lands.

Among them, Clara Bulmer.

Eva Nihil.

The value of the piece depicting the feud between the two is highly appraised, and it is a valuable resource that revealed the bad relations of Clara- who left vast amounts of information behind- and Eva- who left countless songs and stories.

Shannon Circry.

Both she and her sister were mistresses to the empire, and a rare case where sisters were both

included as concubines. A clear indication of the first emperor's womanizing tendencies.

But regrettably, the diary that has been disclosed is only a small portion of it. 【Shannon's Illustrated Diary】, the work that is thought of as closest to the truth, is highly sought after for both its historic and artistic value.

In later years, a drama starring Shannon as the main character was adapted into a movie, and there are rumors her Illustrated Diary contains important truths great enough to overturn the fabric of history itself.

Many historians hold a strong desire to gather all its remaining

entries...

Epilogue: Second Half

... The new capital.

Its foundation fully constructed, the representatives of various countries... when the representatives of the countries that took part in the alliance had gathered, winter had already gone by, and the time was bordering on spring.

The development plan of the capital was still half-way there. But as they couldn't put it off any longer, they gathered the representatives, and Lyle officially proclaimed his enthronement and the formation of

his empire.

He had already begun his rule by then. The area once under the Bahnseim House's direct control. On top of that, the territories of the feudal lords Lyle had crushed on the way. That added to Rhuvenns and Beim. Just because he was busy, it wasn't as if Lyle could get out of managing them.

From the moment the Bahnseim Monarchy was taken down, Lyle's standing was already one where he had to bear responsibility. He was only making a formal proclamation of it.

The palace in the center of the new capital was completed, and that fortified city held a non- standard

construct new to the world. That castle supported up by pillars of vermillion was high and large. The ingredients used to support such weight were the Legend Dragon's horns. It used those red horns, with those crimson pillars supporting up a massive structure.

The representatives of the countries gathered in the receptions hall swallowed their breathes; not only at its expanse, but its magnificence as well. It hadn't been built as a simple fortress for combat, and yet the technological might to prepare this so soon... with all else considered, by their national power alone, they would be a terrible foe to stand up against.

Lyle had succeeded in giving that

impression.

Standing in the hall as representative of Beim's merchants was Fidel Trēs. His daughter was one of Lyle's mistresses, so he had been invited over.

The ceremony had yet to begin, so for not the representatives spoke amongst themselves. The air wasn't too strained, but neither was it gentle. In such a place, all waited for the rites to begin.

As those around knew Fidel had supported Lyle since he was a nameless adventurer, merchant as he was, the other delegates permitted him to line himself shoulder to shoulder with them.

(Guild executives. And the representatives of nations... everywhere's exhausted, so it doesn't seem they plan to scheme too much against the brat. Well, when the princesses and queens of surrounding countries are his mistresses, I guess it's idiotic to start any needless conflict. No, wait! We're talking about that brat here. Perhaps he's waiting for some imbecile to carelessly pull the trigger! He's the bastard who got Vera in his hands with dirty means. No doubt there's something dirty on his mind.)

Alone, without changing his expression, Fidel thought to himself, but as he had continued to support Lyle financially all this time, those around thought he had

presented his daughter himself.

That's just how powerful they thought Lyle was. And that only irritated Fidel more.

(Dammit. They think I offered Vera to him, what's more, they won't even say it to my face! I'll get him back for this. I'll harass that brat the hell of it!)

While he was proficient as a merchant, he was hopeless when it came to his daughter. All the way he wished that the ceremony would start and get over with already...

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... In the room where they prepared for the ceremony, starting with Novem, the female camp got their clothing in order with the assistance of the Valkyries.

Unable to take part in anything too modest, they wore the expensive attire they had ordered for this day. But here was a battlefield.

Novem sat in a chair, getting her hair in order. To her side sat Miranda.

“I’ve made numerous failures in my life, but among them, my greatest blunder was adding you to Lyle’s harem. Even now I regret it dearly.”

As Novem let out a prickly air, Novem sat in front of a mirror,

taking care of her nails.

“Right. I also think I should’ve just abandoned you back there. I regret saving the idiot crying bloody murder and making a ruckus by herself.”

Seeing the two laugh amongst themselves, Shannon fidgeted. While she was wearing a dress, she moved around too much, and it had become disheveled. A Valkyrie reset her clothes.

“Uwah, how scary. I never thought the battles between women would be something so unsightly.”

Near Shannon was Elza in her undergarments. Adjustments on her dress were hurriedly being carried

out by Monica's hand.

"That's right. I won't let myself be a part of it."

"No one cares about that, so put this on. I'm busy here. I have to go over to the chicken dickwad's place and get his appearance in order. I'm sure he's shaking from the loneliness."

Shannon looked at Monica and sighed.

"You sure he isn't going over his address right around now? Lately, whenever you approach him, he's extremely surprised, you know?"

Elza nodded too. She accepted the dress from Monica, the Valkyries gathering around her to help her

put it on.

“It was the same with me. Did he get some new sort of trauma? Ah, it fits perfectly now. You have my thanks.”

There came the sound of something falling. Ludmilla and Gracia. A problem had come out in their dresses. Both of them remained in their undergarments.

“Why do our dresses overlap!? Deep purple is my color. You shall wear something else!”

“I wanted a calm color too! You go change!”

Looking at the feud between the two, a topless Eva seemed fed-up. Her pink-blond hair covered the

important parts.

“They never get tired of it, those girls.”

Having finished put on her dress, Clara was done preparing, so she sat and read a book. She spoke up in regards to Eva’s statement.

“Right, right. Rather, why don’t you just put on your dress already? It’s not our part yet, but the country representatives are already in the reception hall, aren’t they?”

Eva stroked up her hair.

“Not my problem. My dress is being modified. And I wanted to wear something flashier…”

In another corner, May and Marina

seemed uncomfortable.

“These clothes... are hard to move in. And hot.”

“Why am I here...”

The First’s wife taking a liking to her, Marina’s inclusion as a mistress was done then and there. Nearby Marina, even Marrianne was present.

“That’s my question. Why am I... I was called over by the Trēs House, and then the guild executives congratulated me for some reason.”

There, wearing clothes that clearly showed the lines of her body, Thelma folded her arms in delight.

“You still have it good... marrying

before you've learned true desperation. If I didn't slip in here, I'd probably never be able to in my life."

The latter part was spoken quite seriously. Looking at Thelma was the current Holy Maiden of Zayin, Aura.

"If Thelma-san's here, I don't think there's any need for me to be here, you know?"

But Thelma touched a hand to her face.

"Ah, that's no good. I mean, to the country of Zayin, you're the official Holy Maiden. It's going to become hereditary, so it's important for you to have children. Gastone was

rejoicing over how Zayin's future's secure with this."

There were various problems with the faces gathered, and Vera took a look over them. An overly numerous number of Valkyries surrounded Vera.

"If you don't want it, then properly refuse. Rather, father... I told him to move talks towards not growing the harem, so what could his intentions be? And wait, why am I surrounded by these girls?"

Even when she had finished putting on her dress, the Valkyries surrounded her. The ones surrounded in a similar fashion were Novem, Miranda and Aria.

Aria was courteously being dressed. She was making a troubled face.

“H-hey! Why do you have to be so thorough? And it’s a bit loose around my stomach. Can’t you tighten it a...”

“No.”

“Rejected.”

The Valkyries giving immediate responses, Aria dropped her shoulders. Her hair that always curled upwards had been set straight today. While Aria was unable to keep calm at these foreign garments, the Valkyries stayed by her and voiced their complaints.

“Young lady, don’t walk in long

strides."

"No sudden movements!"

With Valkyrie Unit Seventy One by her side, Lianne looked over the scene. It seemed she had noticed, so she asked Unit Seventy One.

"Hey, an honest question, but could it be those four are..."

"Correct. It would be best you hurried up, Lianne-san."

Lianne sat in her seat, spreading a folding fan to over her mouth.

"That's a surprise. With Novem and Miranda, I don't think it would be strange if they assaulted him, but Aria and Vera? I should be a little more assertive myself."

... In what? No one around thought to ask.

“Ah, I got some cream on it.”

“Shannon, hurry and change. And Elza, you stop eating too.”

As Shannon spilled her sweats and stained her dress, Miranda scold her. While she was at it, she got angry at Elza eating sweets alongside her.

Novem turned to Aria.

“Aria-san, you can’t settle down and sit still?”

“I mean... I just can’t calm down. I did want to wear a dress, but it’s kinda embarrassing come this far.”

May and Marina.

“Hah, I want to eat some meat.”

“Agreement. Someone bring some meat over.”

Vera looked at the two.

“Of course that’s no good. We won’t be eating much today until the ceremony is over. You got that? The same goes for the evening party.”

As the two of them made faces of true fear and surprise, the other members... the mistresses pushed on by various nations couldn’t let out their voices before these peculiar members...

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“Are you screwing around!?”

Out of his usual tank top, Erhart stood in my room in formal attire. He complained to me in tears, but upon hearing the reason, I was the one who was surprised.

“Like I know! This is the first I’m hearing of it! I don’t want my numbers growing any more either! I have it hard as it is! I’m freaking terrified! Everyone… everyone’s so scary. If Aria wasn’t there to comfort me, I don’t know what I’d…”

As I held back my tears, Erhart panicked. I’m sure he had the same

experience as me, or he had realized this wasn't someone else's problem. As I thought, it was the right choice to expand his circle of friends.

I wanted friends who could understand this feeling, so I pushed various things onto him. Like women, and fame.

But I could understand why he'd be angry. I never thought Marianne-san would be pushed onto me on the appointed day.

That blasted Fidel, so this is the reason he sent that smile at me. I thought I told him to proceed talks towards rejection, but for me to take a mistress from the Guild as well...

“I-I’m sory. But why does it have to be Marianne!?”

Even so, Erhart couldn’t forgive his first love becoming a mistress. But Maksim in the same room tilted his head to the side. Damien was the same.

“Why? Because that Marianne-dono didn’t have anyone special? And it seems you’ve gathered quite a number of females’ affection yourself.”

“What’s more, your confession was rejected, right? Then I don’t think this is a problem that concerns you.”

Being cut down so soon by their words, Erhart collapsed at the

knees.

“EEERRRRRHHHAAARRRTTT!”

“I... was no good. But even so, I wanted Marianne-san to find happiness... goddessdammit!!”

There, Baldoir looked at us and sighed.

“What are you doing, you four? More importantly, Maksim-dono, has there been any progress between you and Adele? I heard your confession was a success.”

There, Maksim-san bashfully held up his head.

“How foolish. It succeeded. But our relationship is nothing further than a kiss. See, I want to enjoy our

newly-married life, ‘Just the two of us’.”

Perhaps that was a low blow at me, or at Erhart. Or maybe even Baldoir. Damien sipped some tea.

“How envious. My research lab’s going to be completed soon, so I’ll be able to devote myself to creating my ideal woman.”

Erhart looked over us.

“... You’re all definitely strange. The screws in your heads have blown the hell away.”

I looked at him, thinking over how rare it was to see him in presentable wear.

“... You’ve shown some splendid

pluck. Understood. To the heartbroken Free Knight Erhart, I- the one who appointed you as a Free Knight- shall introduce you some women to make up for it. How does Princess Annerinne sound? She's a cute person."

Erhart stood and pointed at me. Baldoir said, "You're being disrespectful," but Erhart was a valuable existence who complained at me. Just leave at that. Otherwise, there would be no fun to be found in teasing him.

"Cut the crap! Just how much trouble do you think I went through because of that fluffy Free Knight title!? Just the other day, I was sent a request for Dragon Slaying, and it really was nothing but trouble."

Apparently, Erhart defeated a Land Dragon. How wonderful. I knew he had talent, but as expected of the man I recognized.

“In response to your good work, I’ll give you public recognition next time. From your fluffy standing, you need only enjoy your harem.”

To my smile, Erhart held his head in both hands. This guy, back when I met him, he wasn’t looking at reality, but by the time he woke up, he had the harem he wanted in his hands.

Some wishes do come true, I wanted to say.

“As if I can support so many with this fluffy standing! At this rate, I

really will be assaulted! I'm on the verge of being raped here!"

... I ask you don't say that to someone who really was raped. While we're at it, just get assaulted already and come over to this side. I wanted to say. Dammit, for my healing factor to be this damn tank top and the bride's father of all people.

It irritates me, so I'm going to rile Fidel.

There, Baldoir checked the time on his pocket watch. It seems the time was coming near.

"Lyle-sama... no, your majesty. The time is here."

I took a light breath, and changed

my train of thought.

“Understood. I’ll head for the hall.”

Maksim-san and Damien stood as well, while Erhart complained, “you people change gears too fast.” The five of us circled around to the back of the hall, where Rauno-san stood on lookout.

“The preparations are in order, your majesty.”

Without his usual unshaven stubble, his dress was in order today. Nodding to the words of my retainers, I set out into the hall.

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A position to look down over the lines of country delegates, and the representatives of organizations.

In the depths of the hall, a high place was prepared with stairs leading down. On top of it was a throne. It was made amply extravagant to show off a sense of majesty.

As I made my entrance, the orchestra on standby began its performance. Within that stately air, everyone lowered their heads as I climbed the stairs to the throne.

One step. Another... a red carpet was draped down the steps to the throne.

I could see my seat over the corpses that paved my way.

The red carpet looked like blood to me.

As I climbed up to such a height, I was certain I was the grand villain. From the world's point of view, it wouldn't be strange if they thought I had used my own sister to drop the Bahnseim Kingdom and take it for myself.

A disaster caused by a person of the Walt House was merely contained by another Walt.

Normally, playing the hero and leaving once everything was over may have been cooler.

But I couldn't do that.

I had my promises.

And I couldn't run from the responsibility of all those I had killed.

I had climbed so high by killing so many.

There was something called a minimum level of liability.

Climbing to the top, I saw the seat. The throne. Having walked so far, I turned to take a seat, ending up looking down over all.

I was sure I was going to offer the rest of my life to governing them. Even I had to wonder why I'd made such a choice.

I felt I would be crushed under the

weight of this charge, but I got the feeling my ancestors were watching me from somewhere. In that case, I couldn't do anything to embarrass myself.

Taking a seat, I spoke for everyone to raise their heads, proclaiming I had officially ascended to the throne. At the same time, I proclaimed the unification of the continent. It was already recognized a majority of the countries would come under the empire's rule. And we had managed to exhaust the continent as a whole.

Especially the Bahnseim Kingdom... the desolation of the continent's center was great, but even so, the empire had shown its might in battle.

We should be fine for the time being. Henceforth, we can only apply ourselves to domestic affairs and diplomacy. That's better than war, I'd have to say.

Even now there were times I wondered if some hero of the goddesses was out there somewhere. If they were, I would never have thought to do so much myself. But there was no one. There weren't any humans to cause a stir.

Even if there were, whether they could beat Celes or not...

So I decided to do it.

As the ceremony carried on, I played the part of the emperor of my ideals. What came to my mind

was my ancestors.

If I asked the First about empires, he'd probably take a, 'pshaw,' attitude.

Perhaps the Second would make a bit of a troubled face.

The Third would have a laugh at his descendent taking the throne.

The Fourth would be noisy about rule and money.

The Fifth... wouldn't say much, but he'd at least tell me, 'don't push yourself'.

The Sixth, let's see. I'm sure he'd be worried at my surplus of wives.

The Seventh may have cried from

joy.

The Eighth... what words would my father offer to me? I had few memories of my time before ten, and from then on I only had memory of him taking a cold attitude towards me. He apologized to me at the end, but I couldn't imagine what he would say.

Deep. I think these were a very deep two years. Driven out of the house, I became an adventurer. Became an adventurer without a goal, met Aria and met Miranda, and...

Perhaps my reunion with Celes was the true beginning. Facing defeat in the falling snow of Centralle, from the moment I saw Celes command that city of madness... I held a true

goal for the first in my life.

That's why I'm here.

That's why I'm looking back on my life here.

It was just as Milleia-san said. Build up a mountain of corpses and sit on the throne.

The ceremony went on. The representatives who voiced their loyalty to me.

"We shall come under the rule of the empire, and pledge our allegiance to the emperor."

Those words put everyone on their knees.

Within all that, when I think over

how many may be after my neck, it sends a shiver down my spine. Even if I knew what I built up would someday fall to decay, I had to go on under the assumption it would continue forever. A continent that fell to ruin in only a few years.

It should be fine for it to have a brief moment of peace.

I'll devote all that remains of my life. It may not be much as compensation, but for however long it buys us.

"I am delighted at your pledge. I shall devote this body- young as it is- to be a good lord to all. I ask that you help support up this empire with me."

Though I doubt you will... okay, taking it that far would be a lie, but at the very least, put in some work too, is what I wanted it say.

I mean, when I used to have eyes like a dead fish, I was driven far enough into a corner to resolve to unify the continent. If the surroundings helped just a bit more, I think I could've helped out as just a single soldier or adventurer.

Though it's too late for that.

Someday I'll hand this position over to the next generation. That would mean pushing various troubles onto them. When I thought of it that was, I felt a bit apologetic. I have to at least settle what I'm capable of.

I’m anxious whether or not I’ll be able to entrust something as the others had.

But even so, I’ll walk ahead a step at a time.

Walk and walk, and at the time I stop, to the next generation… I’ll give someone else’s back a push. That’s the sort of existence I want to become.

Just like those seven.

Just like my ancestors who supported and led me.

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... The birth of an empire that had unified the land after its three hundred years of separation.

The golden age of its long rule came around a hundred years after its founding. From there, it experienced many changes in times alongside numerous uprisings, yet maintained its hold on the continent for five hundred years.

But all that rises must someday fall, and with the flow of time, the empire fell apart. After that, a period of warring states descended, and it took quite some time before the lands were united again...

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… On the classroom's blackboard, the history of the continent in its imperial days were lain out.

On the neck of a young boy receiving lessons in that classroom hung a pendant of silver. A blue gem was embedded into it, and it was quite an old piece.

Behind the teacher's desk, the teacher lightly tapped his fist against the board as he spoke.

"Well, all this history's something of an opening act for the warring states period that followed. What I'm going to teach you now is the more popular stuff. But when you delve deeper into the empire of that

era, you'll find it's quite an interesting thing. The heroes that clashed on the battlefield were actually all descended of that first emperor, or so some say. But it's true in order to stake a legitimate claim, there were plenty of folks who proclaimed themselves descendants of the emperor. That's why there are so many Walts around these days. Even some in this classroom, right?"

Eyes gathered on the young boy, alongside some laughter. As the boy was faint of heart, he hung his head down.

There, the history teacher began speaking with pride. Perhaps he really loved history, as he had done much research into it himself, and

it seems he held his own thoughts on the events.

“But it really is shady how that first emperor called himself a God Emperor. What’s more. The country that became a trigger for the empire’s founding, you see, the truth is, the first emperor’s sister married into it. Your teacher thinks the Walt house just caused some trouble to swoop in and resolve it. Look into it, and it gets exceedingly fishy. Driven out of his house, he went and played the part of what we call a Hunter these days.”

The teacher who spoke on eloquently did have the research to back up his pride. The first emperor was a terrible womanizer, what’s more, he didn’t make it in time to

save the commercial city that supported him.

Displaying various other bits of information, he gave his own impression of events. And, to conclude, he gave as a preface.

“The first emperor wasn’t some God Emperor, he was just your everyday neighborhood gigolo. The deeper you dig into it, the shadier it gets. There’s that Shannon who’s popular in movies and dramas, right? The cause of her muddled life in the inner palace was that emperor, and your teacher thinks he must have been the absolute worst to put her through so much. That Free Knight Erhart who operated at approximately the same time is more of a hero than him.”

The teacher spoke with a smile. There, more eyes gathered on the Walt-named boy, and some ill-natured students even pointed their fingers and laughed.

The bell rung to signal the end of the lesson; the teacher looked at the clock and began getting his things in order.

“I’ll erase the blackboard. Now then, who’s on duty today?”

After the student on duty said, “stand, bow,” everyone stood and lowered their heads. Once the professor had left, the boy sat back down in his seat.

That class was the last one of the day, so in the time it took for the

homeroom teacher to arrive, the boy stuffed his textbooks and notebooks into his bag.

At that moment, a few off the ill-natured boys came over to him.

“Oy, looks like your house is the worst.”

“The worst! The worst!”

As the boys teased him so, he silently hung his head. Endured until the teacher arrived, and when school was over, he hurriedly ran to leave the premise.

He didn’t want to be in school. The reason being...

Confirming no one was around, the boy spoke.

“Um, please don’t make such a ruckus. My fatigue’s been terrible lately...”

There, Lyle’s voice came from the Jewel... the Jewel that had regained its glow.

『I’m going to smack some sense into that teacher! Who’s the worst!? Who’s a damn gigolo! The reason the inner palace was so muddled wasn’t my fault!』

There, came a rough voice. It was the First.

『Hmm, emperors sure have it rough. But our ninth generation’s the emperor? Doesn’t really feel real to me.』

Their records reset, they were back

to when they had no memory of Lyle. But from the young boy's point of view, it was nothing but a nuisance when those eight acted up and chipped away his Mana.

"Um, quiet please..."

He heard the voice of the Second.

『But even so, I can't forgive that teacher. Saying such things of our direct descendent... that was plain harassment, wasn't it?』

The Third laughed as he spoke, but he seemed to be angry. His words were scary.

『Should we do it? Murder's a sin, and it's punished quite heavily these days, but crushing him socially should be easy enough.

Let's make it so he'll never be able to stand again.』

The Fourth sounded reluctant. But it's not as if he didn't want to get back.

『Do such a thing, and it's too high a risk for us. In this case, anonymously... public schooling, was it? Send a report to whoever's managing this organization... with evidence.』

The Fifth didn't usually talk much, but.

『... Make it clear to those terrible children where they stand. I hate those sorts of brats the most. First thing you have to do is look into their households.』

The Sixth was laughing. The boy sent a whisper.

“Q-quiet, please…”

『Fwahahaha, strengthen yourself a bit with a Skill, talk with your fists, and they’ll understand in no time. That’s how it is, so let me teach you how to fight. First aim for the eyes!』

The Seventh let out a fed-up voice.

『You can crush them without having to resort to that. Well, it’s fact that I can’t stand that teacher. Let’s make him cry in lament at having made light of our Walt House!』

Lyle agreed to his grandfather- the Seventh’s words.

『Like hell you can let it end with brats of that level saying what they want! I... I'm not at fault at all! Rile them up! I'll teach you how to rile like you're riling Fidel! ... Well, you're the one who'll be getting back at them. Best of luck. Don't be sparing with our assistance. Though even if we cooperate, it'll just be advice, or teaching you how to use Skills.』

The ancestors told him to work hard at his revenge. The young boy who inherited the Jewel with those ancestors recorded in it hung his head.

He tottered off as he muttered. The voices he had come to hear from the day he accepted that blasted blue gemstone.

He never would have thought they were the voices of his ancestors.

“I don’t want this anymore, these ancestors. Monica-san, what am I supposed to do?”

As the boy muttered the name of his home’s housekeeper, his eyes were teary.

Hearing amused laughter from within the Jewel, the young boy found himself sympathizing with his teacher and classmates.

『It’s getting fun around here!!』

The voices that only the young boy could hear... were in high spirits today...

* * *

Octō (; ∀) : “...”
Octō (∀ ;) : “... Eh!?”
Octō (∀ ;) : “... they actually ignored me!?”

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